

Conviction politics is based on meeting some basic need...

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I have suggested on many occasions that what Labour needs to do if it is to turn limited electoral success in council elections into a general election victory is to deliver a strong narrative that people can believe in. Candidly, I am bemused as to what is quite so difficult about this. Whilst people are complex as individuals what we want is often remarkably consistent, and so predictable.

I suggest:

- People want to work.
- They want fair pay.
- They want a home they can afford.
- They want education for their children if they have them.
- They want health care.
- Pensions matter to them personally, and for their relatives as they imply security in old age.
- They need security, physically and legally.
- They want to feel they are respected.
- They want to feel they are part of a community.
- Access to entertainment is important.
- For all these things transport is necessary.

What is needed beyond these things? Actually, remarkably little since if these conditions are met most people can live the life that they want. You could say I have omitted material needs - but I haven't: that is what fair pay is for, coupled with the

choice it enables, which should be permitted and encouraged as markets very definitely have a role.

If tax assists and does not impede these goals then it is both tolerated and paid.

In exchange people expect economic stability and will vote against those who do not supply it.

And that's it: I am sure the list can be refined but in essence this is what people want.

And the difference in political philosophy should almost be as simple. Neoliberals say it's up to you to achieve these things and then provides an environment that preserves your claim to them against others who have yet to achieve them (this being true across party boundaries, as is now clear) whilst the left should say it is our job to make sure as many people as possible have access to these things because we are all, without doubt, better off when the benefit of them is shared as far as possible.

I am well aware of how naive I will be called for saying this.

My defence is a simple one: people want clear, straightforward messages. They don't want to know about VAT cuts on windows or enterprise investment schemes in Middlesbrough. They want to know what people stand for in unambiguous, unchanging over time, terms. So you build your politics on conviction, on the assessment of what people really want, and how you can deliver it. The rest follows.

And right now since only UKIP is doing that (from the right, and even if they're getting their delivery message hopelessly wrong) we see the result.

Politicians should take note.