

A note to Labour: content matters and communication mat..

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John Harris has a [fascinating analysis of what's wrong with Labour](#) in the Guardian this morning: I recommend it.

I think that the piece includes a compliment from which I can take a little credit (no more) when under the heading 'Labour has missed the digital revolution' Harris says:

Exploitative "work experience" schemes. Corporate tax avoidance. The campaign to outlaw Page 3. These issues have all flared into life in the past 18 months, and proved that left politics in the UK is alive and well. The Labour leadership has had almost nothing to do with them: instead, far away from Westminster, they have been put on the agenda by people and organisations who understand where civilisation is headed: towards more "horizontal" organisation via social media and activity that can amass huge momentum in a matter of hours. Labour feels as if it is light years behind, playing the political equivalent of progressive rock, while the world turns punk: Miliband's favoured method of getting his message out still centres on set-piece speeches and coverage in the print press, and even such bog-standard things as viral videos seem to be beyond his party's grasp.

I'd agree with all that. Labour's messaging is bad and any organisation that cannot get such basic things right now is going to fail. And if I can do some of this stuff candidly Labour should be able to do it. But it seems unable to do so. Even basic things like tweeting seem beyond it, as Harris points out. To keep an audience happy and engaged that's not an optional exercise: you do it.

But whilst messaging is important content is key and let's be clear that this is what Labour is really lacking. There simply is no vision. When half of Labour wants to outdo the Tories in kicking social security claimants, whilst another part lives in awe of choice and the market which people quite clearly do not want or need (because whatever the focus groups say people want to use the bit of the NHS on their doorstep - which is where they expect to have it) then unsurprisingly people have no clue what Labour is for.

They have known what tax justice is about.

Tax justice is about big business paying its fair share.

It's in fact about everyone paying their fair share when they can, and getting the help they need when they can't.

It's about a level playing field for all business - large and small.

It's about honesty and being opposed to cheating, whether that cheating is legal or illegal.

It's about professions acting in the public interest as well as for private gain.

It's about government being accountable for the decisions it makes - and admitting mistakes.

It's about business doing what it does best, and government doing the same.

It's about standing up for a country's right to tax whilst also cooperating with others and their right to collect what's legitimately owed to them as well.

It's about being efficient when it comes to tax systems, but also about being compassionate.

It's about helping those in need, here and elsewhere.

It's about recognising there's such a thing as enough.

It's about saying society matters - as much as we do as individuals.

And it's about equality for all before the law.

No doubt I could add a few more things - but they'd all reiterate the point that it's not hard to work out what tax justice is about, why it appeals and what is implicitly right about it.

Labour should be able to say something like that. But it can't. And that's why it's in trouble.

Content matters, communication matters. But principles matter even more.