

Why don't politicians hear that what people are saying ...

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Politics is in a mess. The [Tories are relying on immigration hysteria](#) to rally support, and are tearing themselves apart in the process. [Labour is tearing itself apart in Scotland](#). The Lib Dems face annihilation in 2015. [The spectre of UKIP](#) hangs over debate. Politicians are loathed. Russell Brand tells people not to vote in protest whilst Hong Kong fights for the right to political representation. Scotland almost left the Union. And our Prime Minister fulminates on EU contributions that he plainly should have known about in a way that can only be designed to spread our internal confusion into a wider arena.

Through all this there is, although politicians appear not to have noticed, an economic crisis going on. Real wages are falling. House prices are increasingly unaffordable. A younger generation are being saddled with debt if they go to university, and they do so because their work prospects are poor if they don't and not much better if they do. Maybe 5 million people are unemployed, under-employed or say they are self employed but appear to be making little income and are paying almost no tax as a result. Those on benefits for any reason are despairing. The NHS is out of money and no politician is saying how they will fill the gap. Protest in Parliament Square is oppressed and the national media mysteriously ignore it, leading to quite reasonable questions about independence. Growth, such as it is, is not reaching most people and is anyway not expected to last, but the rich are definitely getting richer and the stock market has had a go at breaking its all time high.

It does not take rocket science to see these events as connected. They are. People are completely disenchanted for good reason. We all get fed up when no one appears to listen to us, or they say they do and then completely fail to understand what we have said. And that is exactly what most politicians - including UKIP (who simply say nothing of substance) are doing to all those who address them.

What those politicians are universally ignoring is the message people are sending that they do not think what is happening is fair. Any parent will be used to hearing that message from a protesting audience for whom they are responsible. Frequently it is wise to admit that things aren't fair because that is the only way to retain credibility,

and in the case of children that may, very often, be as far as the matter goes, because the unfairness is about the unequal relationship between carer and child that sometimes means the carer's wish has to prevail, come what may. But in the case of politicians addressing adults the admission that the world is not fair (usually described as "we hear your concerns") cannot then be followed by an absence of action because the people of this country, rightly, feel that they have the right to be treated as equals, and that politicians are treating them with contempt when they fail to acknowledge that fact. Just reward is now being delivered for that failure to respect the electorate.

So what is unfair?

Globalisation and the unjust reward of companies is unfair.

Income and wealth distribution is increasingly unfair.

The political system is unfair, as is access to it.

Job prospects are unfair.

The terms of employment are unfair.

The benefits system is unfair.

Housing is unfair.

The tax system is unfair.

The burdening of the young with debt is unfair.

Forcing people to borrow because wages are too low is unfair.

To be blunt, the bias of the whole economy towards rewarding some especially well at cost to most is unfair.

The role of the media in relying on advertising that promotes unattainable wants for many whilst revealing lifestyles that only highlight the unfairness that exists reinforces the whole message of unfairness.

And the result is anger. And a blame game that the Right have turned onto an innocent party, because that is what they always do, making immigration the focus of concern when it is a symptom of the malaise, has resulted.

So what is the malaise? That's our whole economic system. We cannot continue with an economic system that is predicated on employing fewer and fewer people on lower and lower wages to increase productivity to thereby increase the return on what is described as capital of which there is less and less being invested because those who

own it do not wish to take the risk of their wealth being used productively in case it is lost, meaning that they prefer short term speculation instead of long term wealth creation, which is a choice that only deliberately exacerbates wealth and income divides.

So what are the choices? The right would have it that the market is the solution, even though it is thirty five years of market based solutions that have created this crisis. The right are, therefore wrong. There is no market based solution to a crisis of market failure. Let's not pretend that there is, because it cannot happen.

The only solutions are to be found in alternatives to the mess that markets have delivered. As Scottish Labour are rightly saying, this requires a profound shift to the left. There is no other choice.

The state has to invest in the economy when no one else will.

The state has to build houses because no one else will.

The state has to build the infrastructure that no one else can.

The state has to liberate the underused resource of this country - the capacity of it's people - to build the prosperity that people want and know they deserve.

The state has to make clear that its vision of prosperity cannot be based on a consumer boom: the prosperity we need is not based on a quick fix of a move in a decimal place in quarterly GDP. The prosperity we want is all about security, of jobs, of incomes, of services for all, of pensions, of healthcare, of access to education, of security when things go wrong and environmental security.

That said, there are people who very definitely need more right now - because there is real poverty in the UK. So the state has to deliver redistribution too.

And the state has to finance this. The money exists: we bailed out banks. We can bail out economies. The money comes from borrowing, from Green QE, from a levy on new pension fund contributions in exchange for the tax relief given, from a financial transactions tax, from a wealth tax, from progressive income tax, and from collecting taxes that are due. And all are important, for funding, policy and political reasons.

And the state could do more. It could give its staff pay rises.

It could promote union rights to counter corporate power.

It could provide decent state pensions and remove people's well-being from the casino of the stock exchange.

It could commit to the NHS and say tax will be raised to pay for it.

All of this could be done. But it is not being done.

No wonder people are angry.