

Dan Jarvis: analysis of a speech

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I have [been sent a copy of the speech Dan Jarvis](#) gave this morning at Demos.

I stress, my interest is technical: I am interested to see what he is suggesting.

Three phrases stood out amidst a soup of sentiment:

So let's take out the politics.

And:

Keir Hardie said that the British are a practical people, not given to chasing bubbles.

And:

People I meet, the people I am talking about, don't attend economic seminars.

As someone who teaches political economy I think these phrases are pretty powerful. In combination they say three things.

First, don't think. Or, to put it another way, accept the political status quo.

Second, second politics is as a consequence a response process.

And third, it says don't whatever you do have a strategy that you might share with those you are asking to follow: just expect them to do so.

This may well be good for the army. I note Dan Jarvis served in it. As he stressed in the speech, he has been on the frontline three times (admittedly by choice: although I do not doubt his bravery or the value of his service).

The army should be above politics.

When you're on the frontline your job is to accept the status quo - what you are told.

And it is to respond to orders, the meaning of which will all too often not be explained to you.

But that is the army and Mr Jarvis is now a politician. These don't sound like the basis for a sound political strategy in a democracy. Nor do they suggest that Mr Jarvis has a plan. They just say that he's willing to stand before the troops thinking he's the man to follow and because he's got the right pips on his shoulder.

The trouble is he never got enough pips to get to HQ by the look of it. And there such an approach should not work.

Nor should it in politics. And that is why this was a worrying speech. The country is not like the army. I'm not sure Dan Jarvis has worked that out yet.