

Blaming the establishment is indication of failure to c...

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Jeremy Corbyn's new year message [was resoundingly anti-establishment](#). Amongst other things [he said in a tweet](#):

Let's make 2017 the year we come together to take on the establishment and build a Britain for all.

Yesterday the Tory right and UKIP [won the resignation of Sir Ivan Rogers](#), the UK representative to the EU. By any definition he is part of the establishment. Wise people are regretting his treatment and its consequences. The establishment may not be all bad then, which reminded me of a [blog Andrew Purkis wrote](#) a couple of days ago in which he said of Corbyn's new year message:

So the named enemy is the establishment. If the term means anything, that must include the Queen, the Church of England, other church and faith leaders, the senior ranks of the armed services, the security services and the police, the House of Lords, the Judiciary, senior civil servants, the upper ranks of business organisations and professional bodies of all kinds. Many charities are part of the establishment. Many head teachers across all sectors of education are part of the establishment. Does he really want to "take on" this lot? Might it be that important segments and individuals in this capacious category should be part of the solution, not lumped crudely together as the problem?

I have a great deal of sympathy with that. Let's be clear, there is a great deal I do not like about the way the UK has been governed for thirty or more years. I am angry every day at the injustice many people suffer. But candidly I rarely meet bad people, and I think it fair to say that I probably do mix with the establishment on occasion. I know Jeremy Corbyn, for a start.

What I meet instead are people captured by a system, doing what it requires of them. I do not dispute that there are some who drive that system's thinking and I can see every reason why anger is directed at them. But most people in the so-called establishment don't do that. They are just doing what they think seems to be required of them.

You can say they should think more. You can argue that like the concentration camp guard they should not have obeyed what seemed like orders to get by (get a job, get on, pay the mortgage, feed the family, etc, etc, etc.). But the truth is that for that to have happened there would have needed to be an alternative body of thought to which they could have subscribed which provided them with a compelling narrative that they might have thought it worth following as an alternative to the prevailing one. And that's not been there.

And let's not pretend that alternative is some form of socialism, because there is no socialist narrative of real consequence right now. And anyway, if there was its materialistic basis would have put it on conflict with the green narrative, which whilst strong still remains ill formed economically. And as for an alternative to financial capitalism? Some of us have tried to think about that, but it is a bit like whistling in the dark. So of course the establishment, who are by-and-large the deliverers but not the creators of the consequences of prevailing thought, have delivered neoliberal financial capitalism. It's been the only game in town. It still is: that's what is so worrying when its demise seems so near at hand.

That, though, makes an attack on the establishment illogical. All political systems need people to deliver policy, relatively unquestioningly, once a decision is taken. That is how a government gets its way. It does not take more than a moment's thought to realise that. In that case blaming the establishment is largely pointless. Blame the political thinkers by all means. Blame the politicians who delivered neoliberalism, for sure. Blame the media, for certain, because they can carry blame. Blame those who abused the system for gain, as is apparent many in the upper echelons of business have done. But blame most of the establishment? No that makes no sense at all. First, because we need them if government and society are to continue: their skills make things work, like it or not, and let's not pretend they could be replicated over night. But second, blaming them is illogical because the real failure comes from the likes of Jeremy Corbyn who have never come up in forty years of trying with an alternative coherent narrative that these people could have used. And we know he has not done that. If he had then Labour would be talking about it now and be way ahead in the polls, and it isn't.

I have tried such thinking: *The Courageous State* and *Joy of Tax* are evidence of that. I am working on the outline of another book now, [based on the ideas I wrote here](#). But until anyone has got something alternative to offer its not just illogical to blame the establishment for delivering prevailing policy, it's indication of your own failure to come up with an alternative to suggest that doing so is their fault.