

What now for Labour and the left?

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What now for Labour?

Let's face the reality that for the third time in seven years the Tories have won an election if seats and the popular vote is to be taken into account. But, and this is a big but, it also lost its majority, so Labour did extraordinarily well and now we face a hung parliament.

What that means is that the next election campaign has already begun. It cannot be otherwise.

So what must Labour do? My answer is that has to improve its game again. It has done astonishingly well. But it has to do even better. It simply has no choice. It has a majority to win now. And that improvement must start straightaway, and happen continuously in that case.

That means Labour has to get its act together after the election. Jeremy Corby has done so during the election campaign. But now it has to do so day in, day out. The fact is that it sometimes failed to do that over the last two years. It cannot repeat that mistake.

So Labour must unite. It is a left of centre party now. That debate has to be over.

And if it is the case then the in-fighting (and there has been a lot of it) has to end. In particular the party machine, which has fought Jeremy Corbyn from the day he won, has to stop doing so, starting today.

The result must be that Labour starts speaking with a single voice. This is essential if Labour is to get its message out. So if Labour wants to get a better presence in the mainstream media than it has to deliver the stories, and on time. It is the in-fighting that has prevented that.

And it has, of course, to agree on policy, although it's clear it is on its way to doing that.

I hope all these things are now possible. Surely that's not too much to hope?

But the big issue is greater than any of those demands. As quickly as possible Labour has to get its economic messaging right. You can talk about equality and its merits forever but if people don't believe we can afford social justice and that it will really pay for them the Tories will still block a Labour government. And so far it is clear that not enough people are persuaded of this.

That is because of the profound misunderstanding of economics that has been deliberately fostered by right wing economists and think tanks. This suggests that the economy is a household and that it must live within its monetary means, which it is deliberately suggested are finite.

Both these suggestions are lies, of course. The economy is not at all like a household, of course, precisely because a household has a distinct income and expenditure, but in the economy as whole one person's spend is another person's income. This transforms the way we have to get people to think because in this case cutting spend simply cuts someone else's income and negates any benefit as a result. What is more, there is no limit to the amount of money there can be in the economy: the state has the unique right to make it from scratch.

So the biggest challenge for Labour is to persuade the world that this is really the case. What the left has to do is teach the world to sing a new economic song. And we haven't got long to do it. But that's the challenge now. And it's vital.