

A new party?

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The Observer is [full of talk of a new political party](#) emerging in England with potential backing from financiers and philanthropists of at least £50 million. My heart sinks.

The new party will be 'centrist' and pro-Remain. It will reject May and Corbyn. And it will replace the LibDems. It is, in other words, a marketing person's idea of what those most likely to vote in the UK want.

And that is its weakness from the outset. Politics rarely supplies what people want. If it did free holidays in Barbados would be available on the NHS. It has to, if it is to be useful, instead provide what people need.

It is entirely true that politics is failing miserably in this task at present. We do not need Brexit. And we do not need a prime minister who does not believe in Brexit but who is intent on delivering it atrociously, nonetheless. Alternatively, we do not need a party that is committed to an old-fashioned vision of materialist and deeply ungreen socialism to be delivered within the constraints of neoliberal economics, which appears to be what Labour is unsurprisingly failing to inspire people with.

So we do need new vision. But can a marketing person's amalgam of centre ground policies deliver that? I am old enough to remember the SDP. I fear that the answer is no, it is not.

That does not mean I am opposed to the idea of a new party. Anyone who is a democrat believes in multiple parties. If you believe in PR, as I do, then we need more choice. But right now we have first past the post. So the first thing that this new p[arty] has to do is commit to electoral reform.

Then it has to recognise that it will have little appeal in Scotland: there is a different agenda there.

That is also true for Northern Ireland.

And probably for Wales.

All of which suggests that it will have to work pretty hard on working out what national identity it supports: blind Englishness no longer works.

Then it has to be aware that, [as I argued yesterday](#), the old economics is dead. All that went with it has to go including the supposed independent role of the central bank, a belief in monetary policy, the government being hands off, and tax being simply something that is necessary to fund government expenditure. Unless it can understand all of these things (and I mean all) it has no hope of coming up with the economic answers that are needed.

And it will have to understand that young people are angry: more of what kept the baby-boomers happy is not for them. Even if it is true that they want homes, security, a chance of some real leisure between the demands of oppressive work practices and job insecurity, just as their parents might have done, they also want different types of respect, greater environmental awareness, less consumerism and an understanding that all identities can be fluid.

Does it feel like this is what the Observer is enthusing about? I may be wrong, but I doubt it. I think they're getting excited about money backing some re-heated pre-crash tribute act. And that would be deeply depressing. So I hope I am wrong.