

## Building on the wreckage of the UK

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I posted Jonathan Pie's video this morning for a number of reasons.

His discussion of the failure of the social contract is good, and appropriate.

His discussion on tax is brief, but makes clear that effective redistribution is implicit in the consent to being taxed. I think that is right.

His anger is justified. This is not acting: I think this is conviction.

But most I did so because he introduced a term I had not heard before but which seems useful, which is UK scepticism.

As Pie says (the role is an act, but I think a thinly disguised one), he was a Euro-sceptic Remainer. I know the feeling. But now he is a UK-sceptic.

Brexit has revealed the incompetence of our politicians.

And it has shown in a literally cruel light the failings of neoliberal ideology, which this country did so much to promote.

It has revealed the callousness of austerity.

And quite reasonably that callousness has left people alienated.

Meanwhile, on the left an inability to decide has left the term opposition bereft of meaning.

Leadership is absent.

And so we end up with Farage, the ultimate bully who wants nothing to do with real responsibility.

Whatever the talents within the UK, and they are many, politically we have to accept now that the country has failed.

The Conservative Party may finally have ceased to be the most effective election fighting machine in democratic history.

Labour has become so obsessed with triangulation it has forgotten that politics is actually about deciding, which it appears unable to do.

And the alternatives (barring Change UK, which deserves an early death, and UKIP, which is hopefully having it) have yet to breakthrough, excepting the SNP in Scotland and maybe the non-Unionists in Northern Ireland.

Those two countries provide evidence enough to be UK-sceptic. Their reasonable reaction to the UK's failed politics is to leave. And they will.

But in the rump of the country that exists now and will when they have gone, what is there for it?

Anger?

Resentment?

More failed politics? After all, that is what Boris Johnson will supply.

And then?

I can but hope it will be a revival with a new politics driven by a Green New Deal. That, and the desire to actually address the multitude of issues this country faces.

But it is hope alone right now. But not wholly misplaced hope. Because, in amongst the despair I think that there is an understanding that the collapse of our politics was caused by politicians who believed that whatever they did they harmed the market. As a result they did, whenever possible, choose to walk away from problems and claim they were not theirs to deal with. So we had outsourcing. And privatisation. And austerity. And continual anti-government rhetoric from those within it, which has acted like a cancer in our body-politick. That fallacy, which I detailed in my book *The Courageous State*, is what has led us to this dire state. And it is conviction that can take us out again.

I stress though that the convictions of the past will not work. This is the weakness at the core of Labour's position. That conviction fails to address the real issues of our era. Only forward looking conviction, based on a belief that we can maintain enduring life on earth, and that it is our duty to do so, can sustain a new politics of hope, because that is what will eventually drive people to a new common purpose. Nothing else will.

That can happen.

But there is hell to go through as yet before we get there.