

There are a lot of bottoms out there

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The comment I hear time and again from activists right now is that we face five (and maybe ten) years of Tory government, so what might be done to address their issues of concern? It's a question that permeates much of what I do and so it is worth addressing.

The answer is, of course, quite a lot. What we have to recall is that for the last three years parliament has played an exceptional role in politics. Many of us have enjoyed watching that. Those in Westminster enjoyed (and are missing) the adrenaline highs. But the reality is that this is not normal. Excepting the Major years, the last three years and the occasional stress towards the end of the 2010 - 15 coalition (maybe), it has been the norm since 1979 that the government of the day has been able to control parliament without having any concern about getting its way. And politics did not end as a result. Nor did campaigning. And nor did change.

It overstates the importance of politicians to think that what happens in London SW1 is the focus for reform in our society. That understates the importance of other forms of government. And it certainly ignores what happens in broader society. The reality is that by and large politics follows those patterns of behaviour, thought and priority established elsewhere. It does not create those patterns. Even events such as Brexit, which took 25 or more years to be achieved from an initial tiny support base in society at large, are evidence of that. So the question is what else can be done now that Westminster is not the focus?

The answer is simple. It is real things. For example, I am heading for Manchester as I write for a day with the Fair Tax Mark team. The Fair Tax Mark is about changing behaviour, of course. But it does that by doing. It engages with companies to achieve change. It does not just talk about what it wants. It goes out and works with others to achieve it. And some of that is quite hard, technical, fun and occasionally quite challenging, at least technically. Most of the work I expect to do over the next few years is of this sort.

The message is simple. Talking about change is the easy bit. It's fun. I enjoy it. But

showing it is possible is necessary. And sometimes that means actually delivering the mechanisms for change to happen.

I do not decry protest.

Nor do I want to do down debate, discussion or comment.

But for those who want a different world the challenge of the years to come is creating change despite an apparently unfriendly political environment. And that means working around, over and under the prevailing political environment to work with the people who matter more than those who spend their lives in SW1 talking about their aspirations but who actually rarely achieve very much.

In short, the way to achieve change over the next few years is to design deliverable change. That is the goal that we need. And since there are many in the world beyond politics, from across the spectrum of opinion, who believe that change is necessary, the possibilities are big. It just requires a little difference in the way we think. And some practical application.

And if evidence is needed, the Fair Tax Mark now has eight FTSE companies signed up, with more on the way. It's been derided by those who would not wish for change. And yet change is happening. That's real. And it will flow through into politics and beyond in due course. This is what campaigning is all about now.

But, importantly, it's about bringing people with you in the process. And that is what those who despair as to the prospects for campaigning forget. Real change is bottom up and not top down, and there are a lot more bottoms out there than there are tops.