

Funding the Future

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Andrew Rawnsley said this in [The Observer](#) this morning:

In their vagueness about how this feat is to be achieved, the report [on Labour's election loss]'s authors are faithful reflections of the party's leader. Mr Starmer has had almost nothing to say about policy since he became leader. He has been stronger as a prosecutor of the government than he has been as the advocate of a Labour alternative. One shadow cabinet member defends this approach by saying: "No one is ready to hear what a Labour government would do. The summit of our ambition at the moment is to sound credible and reasonable."

There are many occasions when I have difficulty agreeing with Andrew Rawnsley. This is not one of them. I am hearing this comment from across the Labour spectrum now. And I am also hearing the excuses - including that it's been difficult to recruit policy advisers during lockdown.

I do not buy that claim. Nor do I accept that it is sufficient to sound credible and reasonable. These claims only work if one massive assumption is made, and that is that we are continuing to operate within an existing political and economic paradigm, where the only basis for claiming the right to hold office is managerial competence.

That, however, it is no longer true. The economic paradigm has ended. Neoliberalism has failed. The idea that the only role of politics is to put it back on its perch again, as was the objective in 2009, has to be dead, at least on the political left. The need now is for new thinking. That's the idea implicit on [some of my comments published earlier this morning](#). And that new thinking cannot come from, or be the creation of, policy advisers: it has to be the deep-seated vision of the Labour leadership, or it will not work.

I have a fear. It is that Labour has swapped incompetence for competence, but also vision for managerialism. Incompetent vision was not enough. But nor is competent managerialism. It is time for Keir Starmer to show that he is a man of ideas. If he doesn't soon then Labour will fail to capitalise on the mess that Johnson is making, and we cannot afford that.