

# If the Tory politics of spending constraint dominate we...

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From Ben Wray of Common Weal in the [Source Direct newsletter](#) this morning:

*Narratively, the Tories have dominated the politics of public finance ever since the 2008 crash, consistently forcing Labour to operate on its terms. Despite the Tories chucking all those rules out the window even before the pandemic, Labour has never sought to redefine the terms of debate on public finances, and under Keir Starmer and shadow Chancellor Anneliese Dodds they have even sought to out-flank the Tories as the [party of fiscal responsibility](#).*

It seems very strange to be talking about two parties set to compete over austerity narratives at a time of ballooning public spending, but that's where we are. There is another story Labour could tell about public finance, one which would put the Tories on the back-foot. It's one that talks about a revolving door state, where public money goes on corporate bailouts and contracts are outsourced to Tory donors, with little scrutiny or transparency. Tories' spending to help out their pals in the boardrooms, who happily take public money with one hand while signing off on redundancies and pay cuts with the other. Spending which paves the way for privatisation, creating a state that becomes dependent on private providers.

Instead, spend to end the client state; bringing services back in-house, ending the sell-off of our data to corporate vultures, and that any public contracts come with heavy strings attached on pay and conditions. At the same time, talk up how every pound the government spends on local services generates more money which stays in that community than if it goes to big corporates, which extract wealth out of the community. Make the issue what kind of spending, in who's interest, and for what purpose. If there is no serious attempt to re-define the debate, the Tory politics of spending constraint will dominate, and for that we will all suffer.

He's right. I have nothing to add.