

# Funding the Future

## Robert Peston's claim that Johnson and Sunak are social...

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Robert Peston [posted this on Twitter yesterday:](#)

**Robert Peston** @Peston

It is extraordinary that #Covid19 has turned @BorisJohnson into more Castro than Castro. By the time the remade Job Support Scheme, the Self-employed grant and the business grants terminate at the end of March, we will have experienced a whole year of an economy more...

5:26 PM · Oct 22, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

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**Robert Peston** @Peston · 14h  
Replying to @Peston  
socialised - more socialist - than at any point in British history. Countless millions of workers and business owners will have had their income subsidised by @RishiSunak and the Treasury by between 40% and 80% for all or part of the year. It is a bail out unprecedented...

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**Robert Peston** @Peston · 14h  
in peacetime, and is not unlike the socialisation and collective endeavour of a world war. It will redefine us as a nation, and not just because the associated increase in the nation's debt of well over £300bn won't be repaid in most of our lifetimes. The more important...

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consequence is that never again can mainstream politicians say what was seen as truism for the post-Thatcher era, that it is NOT the role of the state to take on the financial risk of keeping workers in their jobs during an economic or technological shock. So very soon after...

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leaving the EU, the UK has tilted towards the European safety-net model, and away from the US model of endemic job insecurity. Politically this poses a significant challenge for Labour, because it will be hard for any Labour leader to argue that Johnson's Tories are...

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in thrall to the free market. If around 10m workers have been on furlough at some point, there are likely to be at least three million benefitting from the remade Job Support Scheme (on the basis of numbers still on furlough and the depressing impact of the covid "tiers"...

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on business conditions) - which would suggest the state will shell out at least £9bn by the end of March just to subsidise the pay of workers whose employers can't afford to pay them for full-time work and maybe can only afford to pay them for a day a week...

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**Robert Peston** @Peston · 14h

of work. Here is the sting. If these are jobs that suddenly become productive again in the spring, then this work subsidy scheme will have prevented 3m additional people being laid off, and their employing

I despaired.

Peston is meant to be a political commentator.

One has to presume that he has some intelligence.

And yet he thinks that ideology can be deduced from actions. And that because Johnson and Sunak have been dragged, kicking and screaming, and with a reluctance that is all too readily apparent, to support the people of this country in a way that will, to a degree (and a patchy degree at that) from some of the worst economic consequences of coronavirus they are now socialist.

No, they are not.

These are blue in tooth and claw arch-neoliberals who are hating every penny that they spend and who cannot wait for the day when they can, or at least will try to, shrink the state again.

All they're doing now is using the undoubted power of the state - which with every breath they try to dent exists - to buy off an electorate who would otherwise riot, and who might do so anyone, so people and so unfair is the distribution of that buy off.

Of course the buy off sets precedents. Never again can it be said that the state cannot act. Never again can the claim that there is no magic money tree be sustained. Never again will the decision not to feed children be seen as anything but callous politics.

But to suggest that this means these people are socialist has to be one of the most stupid of all the many stupid comments made during this crisis.

Socialism is about a state of mind. It is about a priority for people over capital. It is about the intention to deliver full employment. It is about recognising that markets work within state-created rules and within boundaries set by democratic processes. It is about accountability. It is about fairness. It is about justice. And these things are all alien to Johnson and Sunak.

And despite not knowing this Peston is employed as a political commentator.