

Politics can still deliver but only if there is fairness...

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The world is still in quite reasonable shock as a consequence of Trump's attempted coup. It will take a while for the recovery from a US President seeking to overturn his election result with violence to take place.

And maybe it will not. Maybe the legacy of that event will be more violence in politics. After all, that has always been the fall back tool of fascism, and fascism is now out in the open. Maybe a new era has arrived.

If it has, there is only one way to defeat it. That is by delivering what people need to feel safe. It's an observable fact, after all, that most people are not violent. It's very obviously true that most people will, most of the time, live peacefully, if not happily. So the real question is, what tips the balance? Knowing that provides the answer to the question, how do we deal with this?

I have three answers unless I am heading off into the realms of writing a book, which I do not have time to do this morning. The first is 'be fair'. The second is 'be honest'. The third is 'deliver hope'. I will address each in turn.

Be fair

I suspect there are very few people in the world who believe that fairness means sharing available resources equally. It is obvious that this is neither practical, or even, because of differing needs, desirable.

However, deep inside all of us (even if hard to spot in some cases) there is a sense of fairness. It is a natural human condition to care. It is another normal human trait to want to relieve suffering in others. Those concerns are what drive our sense of fairness. We label those who apparently lack these apparent concerns precisely because that is so abnormal.

What we know is that the world we live in is unfair. Real wages increase very slowly. Under Trump the S&P 500 has increased by more than 65% in value. Few resent a person who has worked hard reaping a fair reward, subject to their paying all taxes due

on it within the spirit of the law. But unearned gains of that order, 'earned' by simple reason of having wealth at the start of the period are bound to irritate. When it is apparent that policy in the form of tax cuts drove these gains they should do more than that.

We live in an unfair world. As awareness of that grows, so too does disquiet.

Be honest

Of course, it can be said that Trump secured his support amongst middle and working class Americans despite his pursuit of policy that so obviously suited the interests of his class and not theirs. Which then brings me to my second theme.

Trump has lied about what he has done. There should be no surprise in that. Trump has always lied. But what Trump has done elevates political lying to a new order. Literally anything can be lied about. Regard for the truth is non-existent. So his claim is that increasing on-paper wealth is good for America. It is, in fact, the American dream (when it isn't). But he ignores the reality that millions are automatically excluded from that dream, by his choice. So he lies about that too.

The result is a deeply confused and angry electorate. They know their lived reality does not accord with the claims. And within that conflict the seeds of doubt that fuel conflict grow.

We see it here too, of course. In the UK the second most obvious flaw in the Johnson government, ranking only after its love of cronyism, is its dedication to lying whenever possible. The history of claims that never could, and so have not been, met, is growing by the day. And that too sows doubt, just when confidence is required. Hence my third theme.

Deliver hope

Politics is in a dark place right now. Injustice and dishonesty have created the opportunity for populism to flourish. I would suggest that this has not happened by chance. But what that means is that something very different has to be delivered by politicians wanting to deliver an alternative. That alternative is hope.

Hope has an unusual quality. It is only forward looking. It is the promise that things will get better. Blair, of course, mined this theme with the help of D.ream in 1997. The only problem was that he did not have the vision to match it. He just wanted to deliver more of the same with a bit (but not much) more social justice thrown in. He looked back, and that's not where hope is to be found.

So, hope requires a plan that meets the mood of the moment. I, unsurprisingly, suggest that the Green New Deal is that plan. And the plan has to have three qualities.

It must meet existential need, in this case for survival.

It must meet individual need, in this case for work opportunity within a fair community.

And it must be believed to be possible in terms of delivery.

I may be wrong, but I think the first two are deliverable. Is the third? MMT clearly explains the possibility. But so far the vested interests continue to lie like fury about that delivery option. Meanwhile, QE goes on, but with the problem attached that it increases inequality, which is one of the issues to be addressed and not exacerbated. Honesty about how to address this issue has to be added in that case; without it the rest is not possible.

Summary

Where are we? Reasonably scared, is my suggestion. And yet alternatives are possible. But communicating honestly about the fairness they can delivered is possible, despite the lies of those who oppose change, and the honest recognition that flaws in current delivery mechanisms need to be addressed.

There is an alternative if these issues can be dealt with. It just takes time, and we have to pray that we have it.