

## Has Labour got a vision?

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If the hype is to be believed we are at tipping point.

There is no doubt that Covid cases are coming down, even if the evidence that this is the result of the UK vaccine programme remains in doubt, based on evidence given to the House of Commons yesterday.

There is, however, and despite the massive uncertainties and risks, an emerging plan to reopen the country, even if many well qualified commentators doubt the wisdom of doing so at the pace suggested.

And today there is a leak suggesting that Sunak has realised that the March budget will be a time for more economic support, and not to begin a programme of tax rises and austerity.

In the midst of this Labour has sensed the mood for change with Starmer making a speech today on a new economic vision. Let's see.

I say that for a reason. So far everything to do with the government's planning, at least, is intensely reactive. Some of that is appropriate, of course. I am the first to say that there is genuine uncertainty on what is really happening with Covid 19. I accept the constraint.

And at the same time I do not. Surely there has to be a vision after what has happened for what recovery might look like? It cannot be cronyism, can it? The stench of that arising from Westminster is what has defined this government to date. Beyond the desire to profit friends and to make expedient rather than appropriate decisions little has happened to suggest that this government has got much right as yet. And nothing, barring the smallest of token gestures, and failed schemes such as that on greening housing, provide any real indication of a plan as yet.

In this crisis, where the promise of seeing friends fells like liberation, that may be enough to secure short term support, but there are still nearly four years to go before another election is called. Presuming that Covid does not dominate this entire period

(and it might) what then?

Labour needs to take risks today to differentiate itself from the government. There is every reason to do so. If we are really at a turning point (and if it is not now, it will come) then horizons will lift. At present the government seems without any sort of vision. Having 'done' Brexit it seems devoid of purpose and disinclined to deal with the mess that it has created.

I have no expectation that anything Labour says will have any impact on its fortunes in Scotland. Elsewhere an idea as to why Labour is now worth considering as an alternative on any basis other than 'not the Tories' is overdue and so would be welcome.

But will Starmer deliver? The signs to date have not been good. It will be worth reviewing, although given my schedule today that might not happen until tomorrow, to give fair warning.