

Of course we should say we're afraid - it's the startin...

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I have posted this as a Twitter thread this morning. I suspect I will not be popular with some for doing so. But that is the whole point of the thread...

Nick Cohen [says in the Observer today](#) 'On the left, the list of taboos you cannot break stretches to the crack of doom. Once again, no one admits they observe them out of fear of online abuse or of malicious colleagues demanding their dismissal.' A thread seems to be required...

What are these taboos that the left cannot acknowledge? Let's start with the big one. It's that we live in a democracy. We don't. First past the post doesn't even vaguely approximate to the democracy that we need. We should say it.

Then it has to be said that Labour are as much opposed to democracy as the Tories. Labour willingly partake in maintaining first past the post and are, alongside the Tories, enemies of democracy as a result.

Whilst we're talking of Labour, their tribalism is also deeply destructive. It is obvious that we need a progressive alliance to defeat the Tories now. But Labour refuse to countenance it. They would clearly rather have a Tory government. That has to be said.

Labour is also profoundly neoliberal. Having abandoned social democracy in the late 70s they have openly embraced neoliberalism - and all the anti-democratic aspects of it from independent central banking onward ever since. That has also made them friends of austerity.

Add to all that the refusal of Labour to recognise the ability of the people of Scotland to ever manage their own affairs and the message delivered is one of basic contempt for the people they're seeking to represent.

What are other taboos? One is that the SNP want independence. As many

commentators on my blog note, uncomfortably often, the evidence for that is pretty hard to find right now. The perpetual dithering is what makes it hard to believe, as some in the SNP agree.

And let's also be clear, whilst the SNP remains committed to using the UK pound after independence, whatever it says on that issue indicates it too has a lack of confidence in the people of Scotland to rule themselves. It's not a good sign.

What else is there? Another taboo means that too many greens are not willing to take on the climate delayers. Unless greens are willing to explain just what climate change means and what it is going to cost how are we going to come to terms with it?

There has to be honesty too that climate change is going to demand that we will have to live differently - pretending otherwise is just wrong. That also means addressing migration, and so many other issues, but they remain taboo.

That hints at many issues around discrimination that are also taboo, but I am not going there in this thread.

Instead I'll note that maybe the biggest taboo is about mentioning that most of the left is crippled by the neoliberal lie that there isn't enough money to do what is required. They still believe that tax constrains possibilities. So they argue for right wing policies.

The reality is that we can afford anything we can actually do. Money can always be found to do what is possible; spending to do what is possible literally creates the money required to pay for it. And that spend also generates the tax that balances the books, if desired.

In 1940 Lord Keynes explained this was the way to pay for WW2. He was proved to be right. But this has been forgotten. That is what I am afraid of. I am afraid that the biggest taboo is that the state cannot deliver for a country where so much is possible and needs to be done.

So, I am afraid of the neoliberal taboo that ensnares the left now. That myth seeks to deny us any chance of a future. It would be good if more people said this because it's the truth. But it's always scary when breaking the taboo requires that people stand out in the crowd.

As Nick Cohen said 'On occasion, the most courageous way to fight [oppressive regimes] is simply to admit we are afraid'. I am afraid. But the oppressive regime I fear is not just the Tory government. It's the combined power of neoliberalism that I am afraid of.

The neoliberal mythology of oppression is crippling the necessary process of political change in the UK. It is denying us choice, and even the possibility of choice, all to appease the interests of wealth. Saying that is taboo. But it is what is happening.

If people aren't afraid maybe they've already given in to the power of that myth, and have been numbed into submission by it. That is its purveyors' intention. I just hope that is not true. I hope they are afraid, and sometime will say so. It has to happen. Change depends on it.