

The liberal left

Published: January 13, 2026, 1:27 pm

I was involved in some Twitter debate yesterday about attacks that have been made recently on what has been described as the liberal left, who have been described by some as 'enemies of working class people'.

It so happens that I consider myself to be on the liberal, or more precisely, the libertarian left. I am strongly in favour of moves to reduce inequality, to support working people and their priorities, and to reduce the power of wealth, not least by redistributing it. That, very obviously, puts me on the left.

At the same time I also pretty profoundly anti-racist; pro-feminist; am deeply sympathetic to issues around LGBTQ issues, whilst acknowledging the stresses within those movements; and am welcoming of significant free movement of people. This makes me socially libertarian. Add the two together I could be described as liberal left. I am unashamed about it.

I have to also admit to being what I suspect most people would call an intellectual. It's hard to be a professor and deny that. I am, again, unashamed of it.

But does that mean I am an enemy of the working class? I really do not know why.

I get it that the neoliberal left might be described as such. I am inclined to make that point of some in the Labour Party right now.

But I should add that there are those think they are on the left of Labour who do also, for example, claim that the government is constrained in its ability to print money whilst suggesting that it has a credit card that can be maxed out. They are in my opinion in exactly the same place as that neoliberal left, because they too deny the capacity of the state to provide essential public services from money it can create to deliver services if it wishes to do so.

John McDonnell was one of those who said that. Under him the 'maxed out credit card' mantra was on official Labour position.

And his chief economics adviser rejected modern monetary theory not because it did not describe very accurately how the money economy works, but because he suggested that it did not include a specifically Marxist class based explanation of the process of money creation. As a result he preferred an obviously wrong neoclassical theory.

That's why I could not work with McDonnell.

It's also why I was expelled from the Progressive Economy Forum, which somewhat pretentiously thought itself to be advisers to McDonnell. My crime was always that of opposing the austerity that they would have enabled because I knew alternatives were available that could, intellectually, be explained but which the left did not want to hear.

Am I an enemy of the working class in that case? I challenge those from the far left to explain why, if that is what they think.

And if those making the criticism object to the liberal left, what do they want instead? Is it an authoritarian left? That possibility worries me.