

What Labour has to do to get its act together

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I [posted this thread on Twitter](#) this morning:

Some people have asked me why I seem to be complaining as much about Labour as the Tories these days, so I thought I should explain. A thread.....

Let me start by saying that very obviously I think Labour is preferable to the Tories, but this is not exactly hard. When the Tories are threatening to fall off the right-hand end of acceptable politics Labour should be better.

My problem is that Labour is really not good enough. It is failing on so many fronts.

Glaringly obviously Labour is totally failing to discuss Brexit. This is gross negligence on its part when it is so obvious that Brexit has caused so much damage to our economy and to our society. We all know can't go back yet, but Labour has to say how it will get closer.

Labour is also failing on constitutional issues. Gordon Brown's whitewash is a failure on so many fronts, not least because it totally ignores the need for proportional representation. It also ducks the independence movements, embracing quite staggering colonial arrogance.

Labour's economic strategy is also far from what is needed. Even though the economic strategies of the last forty years have failed Labour is still following them. It accepts the need for austerity. It goes along with high interest rates from the Bank of England. Both are wrong.

Labour's tax strategy is not what is needed. There is no hint that it believes in using the tax system for serious redistribution of income or wealth. Instead it tinkers at the edges with a pledge on the domicile rule that Gordon Brown made in 1997 and did not deliver.

Then there is the issue of public services and support for those working in them. Those services are failing but there is no suggestion that Labour will reorganise them. And Labour is refusing to support strikes by public sector workers who need fair pay to afford to work.

There is more. Labour has promised £28bn for energy transformation. But the figure, already too small, has so not been revised for inflation or the growing need as the Tories delay action. There is no urgency to this.

Meanwhile, Labour works within the myth that there is no money for public services when the reality is that any government can create all the money it needs if there are resources to put to gainful use available in the economy, as there are.

I could go on. And I could elaborate at length. I have chosen not to do so. That's because the charge sheet I have laid out is sufficient. It makes three things clear.

The first is that Labour is not questioning the failed economic and political paradigm that we are living in which is so obviously falling apart at the seams now. Instead it is choosing to live within it. As a result Labour is not offering an alternative, let alone a way forward.

Second, even though it is aware that there are alternatives Labour will not go near them. From proportional representation, to innovative government funding, to a proper Green New Deal, Labour will not listen.

Third, as a result the accusation is that Labour now simply wants to fill the centre-right space vacated by the Tory party as it left the wreckage of Cameron's politics behind. The trouble is that Cameron failed. So too will Labour as it takes on his mantle.

So, what do I want? I think it inappropriate to complain without presenting ideas for an alternative. What I stress when offering that alternative is that the old era - the 40-year hegemony of neoliberalism - has failed, as is obvious. What we need is real change.

Those changes would require (and I am only going for high-level stuff here):

- Proportional representation
- Freedom for countries to leave the Union if they wish
- Closer ties with the EU including single market membership
- Breaking with neoliberal thinking on economics meaning austerity is not accepted and the need to keep banks happy via the Bank of England is rejected as the primary economic goal
- This means that Labour has to walk its talk on being the party of the people and begin to tax unearned income at rates at last as high as those charged on income from work
- The message on public services has to be simple: They have to be valued, funded and be accountable to the public and not to quasi-autonomous bodies of the types created by the Tories
- And on pay, Labour must deliver fair pay reflecting the skills demanded of employees, which few enjoy right now and most in the public sector do not have
- That also means Labour must, alongside reinforcing human rights, also uphold the

rights of trade unions

- Whilst when it comes to sustainability, Labour must be innovative and seek to align savings with the goal of saving the planet

All of this is possible. I believe it would message well. And because people have now realised that neoliberalism has failed us, would be electorally successful. It would also bring Labour back to its roots.

Labour is far from those roots right now. Instead it is a Tory-lite party devoid of ideas and without a plan of action for when, if by chance, it gets into government. And that is deeply worrying, and why I will keep criticising it until it gets its act together again.