

Starmer has to decide. What is more important? Neoliberalism or...?

Published: January 13, 2026, 7:17 am

According to [The Guardian](#), Keir Starmer is going to say today:

If you think our job in 1997 was to rebuild a crumbling public realm, that in 1964 it was to modernise an economy overly dependent on the kindness of strangers, in 1945 to build a new Britain, in a volatile world, out of the trauma of collective sacrifice – in 2024 it will have to be all three.

Apparently he will add:

This is about taking our party back to where we belong and where we should always have been ... back doing what we were created to do. That's why I say this project goes further and deeper than New Labour's rewriting of clause IV ... This is about rolling our sleeves up, changing our entire culture, our DNA. This is clause IV on steroids.

All of which is a string of platitudes, largely because I gather that the draft Labour manifesto is dedicated to having iron-clad fiscal rules and reaffirming the role of independent institutions like the OBR and Bank of England and to establishing an Office for Value for Money.

You can transform the state if you abandon the constraints of neoliberalism that are deliberately intended to prevent that happening but you can't transform the state and keep those constraints in place.

Starmer has to decide. What is more important? Neoliberal rules that deliver a small state or making the state work for people? Trying to do both will be a recipe for failure.