

This country does not need a neoliberal Labour Party

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

I am aware that some people here are quite upset by my comments about Labour. They presume as a result of them that I am trying to upset Labour's chances of being elected, or that I am somehow a traitor to the left-of-centre cause. I am not. A thread...

I have always made clear my distaste for the Tory-led governments that we have suffered since 2010. Their policies have been divisive, increased inequality and prejudice and reduced the well-being of many. They have all been economically incompetent. Can I be clearer than that?

I have also over a long period laid out my objection to the neoliberal, pro-market, pro-austerity, pro-low tax policies that have underpinned those governments, and contributed to the failures that we are now used to.

Those failures include the collapse in public sector pay and our public services. In turn this has led to the widespread belief that nothing works in the UK any more. That's not surprising with our dire economic performance. Again, could I have been clearer? I doubt it.

Please do not doubt in that case that I really do wish that we could be rid of this government for good. Equality, sustainability, fairness, and even the future of life on Earth, depend upon us doing so. In summary, the stakes could not be higher.

In that case, and given the hopelessly inadequate form of democracy which this country suffers, I would conventionally look to the official opposition party that is most likely to be in power next to provide a real alternative to this government.

The reason why I am so disillusioned with Labour is that far from offering that alternative to Tory failure they appear to me (and to a great many other people, it

seems) to be endorsing almost everything that the Tories have done whilst offering more of the same in the future.

There are a number of good reasons for saying this. The most obvious is that Labour has committed to changing almost nothing about what the Tories have done. Even the most egregious of their policies, like the two-child benefit cap and the bedroom tax are to remain in place.

There is no hint of a change to trade union laws. Nor will Labour change draconian laws on protest. There is nothing about rolling back the antidemocratic Henry VIII powers the government gave itself during the Covid crisis. Commitments on nationalisation have been abandoned.

Labour also refuses to say what it will do on quite critical issues, like the NHS, migration, climate change and more. Even when commitments were made, for example, on climate change, there has now been backtracking. If Labour has a policy now it is to blow in the wind.

In addition, Labour is already making excuses for continuing austerity. They don't say that. Instead, they say they will have an 'ironclad' fiscal rule. It just so happens that this means there can be no borrowing for almost everything that is needed, so we get austerity as a result.

But, there is no such thing as a fiscal rule. They are made up. Chancellors create and discard them on whims. No Chancellor has ever delivered upon a rule that they have created. Usually, they have revised them many times so that they can pretend that they work, but they don't.

But now Labour has created another of these fiscal rules with what seems to be the sole intention of preventing public expenditure. I can find no other justification.

At the same time, Labour has committed to creating no new taxes on wealth in the UK, despite the fact that the effective tax rate on those with high income and wealth in this country is dramatically lower than that on most people on average or below average income.

And we all know that there is massive income inequality in this country. In fact, that's a major reason why nothing does work anymore. But Labour says it will do nothing about this.

To me, that appears to be contrary to everything that Labour should stand for.

My question to those who criticise me is, in that case, when was it that you decided to support a party dedicated to increasing inequality because that is what you are doing?

Worse, Labour is also joining with the Tories on many issues. For example, it would

seem that, like the Tories, Labour is trying to suppress the role of devolved government in this country.

When, as anyone who knows them will confirm, Scotland and Wales (and Northern Ireland) are very different places to England, this appears to be deeply insensitive and even offensive.

And it seems to, at best, only want to tinker with migration policy.

Elsewhere, it seems to be 'waiting and seeing'. As definitions of an absence of political vision, let alone belief, go that seems pretty good to me.

Added together, this appears to be a Labour package for maintaining the status quo within UK society as it is at present.

It offers no chance for electoral reform.

It ignores the reality of this being a United Kingdom.

And it accepts inequality, prejudice, lack of opportunity and low pay as if they are to be tolerated.

In fact, what it reveals is that Labour has the same profoundly neoliberal mindset that the Tories possess. There is deeply implicit in Labour's policy approach a belief that government is unable to do anything to affect change.

At the same time, if the existence of a problem is recognised then Labour, like the Tories, now assumes that the market must provide a solution, as is obvious from Labour's commentary on the NHS now.

When it comes to the environment, there is nothing in what Labour has to say that offers any form of hope. Ed Miliband has tried to be progressive. He has been slapped down with the suggestion that he is a tree hugger.

Despite all this evidence, which Labour must have carefully produced, those who would criticise me are asking me to believe three things.

The first is that Labour is left of centre. I can find no evidence to support that claim.

The second is that Labour will deliver the sorts of reform that people like me want when it is in office, even if it is not indicating that fact now. I can see no reason to believe that when every person who is vaguely left of centre in the party is being expelled.

Third, I am told not to rock the boat because there is no alternative to the Tories except a neoliberal Labour Party whose only claim to office would seem to be that it would run a feeble government slightly less corruptly than the Tories.

If there are those of left-wing persuasion who wish to believe these things, please go ahead and do so. Your regret will be something that you have to live with. I have just come to terms with my disenchantment with Labour earlier than you have. That is the difference between us.

What I am not happy to be told is, however, that my actions are pro-Tory. Supporting Starmer's Labour Party, which I would rate as being comfortably to the right of Cameron and Osborne, is to be that.

What I also resent being told is that I've a duty to compromise to get Labour into office when it is Labour's wholly unnecessary tribalism (that is decidedly imperial in tone) that has created this absurd situation where neoliberalism is now the only option on the national agenda.

Finally, please do not tell me there are no alternatives. I can find a variety of conviction-based politicians who really do provide an alternative to Labour.

And if the worst came to the worst, I could vote LibDem, knowing that they are at least committed to Europe and electoral reform, both of which are very high on Labour's list of failures.

Trust me, I wish that I did not have to say any of this. I wish, instead, Labour was willing to provide a genuine social-democratic range of policies that reflected the preferences of the people of this country.

I also wish for a party with a chance of office that truly understood the reality of the mixed economy and what this country really needs to deliver prosperity instead of being faced with one that appears clueless on this issue.

In essence, I want a party that can deliver firm government to underpin the well-being of the country with conviction-based policy that is intended to deliver real growth in well-being. Labour has, however, now very firmly vacated that space.

And finally, for those who are thinking that I am calling for the restoration of Corbyn and McDonnell, that is not true.

Whatever qualities he might have, Jeremy Corbyn was not suited to lead the country whilst John McDonnell signed up for a fiscal rule little better than that now subscribed to by Rachel Reeves, and it would have been disastrous. They were not a dream team either.

This country requires a government that is principles-based, rooted in sound economics, dedicated to sustainability, and that by conviction is determined to deliver greater equality.

As it stands, Labour is not going to do that. Don't ask me to support them if they are

choosing to fail, because I won't.