

Labour is not as out of touch with reality as the Tories...

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There is much to reflect on in the local election results so far, and although the mayoralties might still swing some opinions, if not much about the reality about how truly dismal a night this was for the Tories. All that really surprised me about their result is that there are still people with any vague relationship to ethical principles who remain willing to vote for them. I really do wonder what planet they live on.

But they are not the only deluded people in politics. For all its claims that the election is not a foregone conclusion, the Labour leadership has, according to people I have been talking to, formed the opinion that they walk on water based on recent opinion polls. For the record, they don't. And these results suggest that they really do not, precisely because most suggest that there is nothing like the level of support for Labour in English communities that general election opinion polls, rigged as they are by our first-past-the-post electoral system, imply.

In reality, the swing towards Labour was nothing as big as those parliamentary polls suggest. Given better choices, many people have chosen LibDems, Greens and other candidates instead of Labour, suggesting Labour's support is soft and heavily based on antipathy for the Tories.

I really cannot see a Tory recovery from this point for some time to come. It will take a decade or more for the memory of Truss, Johnson, Sunak, May and Cameron - every one of them a dud - to fade. But that said, Labour is utterly delusional if it thinks this has won them real affection. It's incredibly hard, I suspect, for almost anyone to feel that for a party that has abandoned all its principles and its only two identifiable policies in the form of the Green New Deal and the reform of worker rights. As we know, even its member's loyalty is strained.

In contrast, the Greens are clearly creating true believers in places like Bristol.

I also suspect the LibDems, with their own peculiar (in the proper sense of the word) dedication to local issue politics, have done the same thing in many places.

Meanwhile, all that Ben Houchen has proved is that £3 billion of bungs from central government for a bankrupt idea buys short-term political favour.

But let's also consider the bigger political issues for a moment.

Reform has failed. I think it has two seats. It is doing nothing like as well as UKIP did. It is annoying the Tories. It is giving racists and headbangers something to do. But it is not winning support. Its only real achievement seems to be to keep the Greens off the BBC.

There are two reasons for this. The first is the racists and headbangers already have the Tories singing their tunes, so they don't need anywhere else to go.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the message from these results is that Brexit has ceased to be a political dividing line. Or, to put it another way, people have seen through it and the lies and racism that underpinned the arguments of many (not all, in the latter case) of those who promoted it and want to return to the sanity of politics that deals with reality.

The messages to Labour on Gaza that are also very obviously being sent reflect the same theme. Those who are anti-Semitic are rightly not tolerated, but nor is blind faith in a form of Zionism that is racially exclusive tolerated either.

What do I read into all this? Essentially, I think that there is a search for sense and a bemusement as to where it might be found.

I also think that my belief that those voting for Labour in a general election might suffer the most considerable buyer's remorse is reinforced.

Labour's refusal to talk about Brexit is failing it, and the country.

Its failure to also commit to obviously needed policy on climate issues, worker's rights, refugee rights, disability rights and much more is unacceptable to many, as is Starmer's Zionism in the face of genocide by a government he will not condemn for its actions.

It is, however, austerity will condemn it when no one believes that there is nothing that can be done to address failing government services.

Labour is not as out of touch with reality as the Tories, but it has only a vague relationship with it. And that is why other parties are appealing.

The future is unclear, barring one thing. Enthusiasm for our two leading political parties is not strong, and not nearly as much as they still like to believe.