

Starmer has no ethical or political framework to guide ...

Published: January 13, 2026, 4:05 am

There are a number of basic elements to politics, but in practical terms the most important one is that it requires that decisions be made. In turn, this requires that a politician has a set of criteria known to them, and hopefully to others, which guide them when undertaking this process.

As is now very apparent, whatever decision criteria did once guide the Tories, they are now either now dispossessed of them, or those that remain are so alien to people in the UK that they no longer wish to associate with them. As a consequence, that Party and the country are in a total mass .

In response, Starmer had turned the Labour Party into a mechanism for the delivery of what Rafael Behr, in [the Guardian this morning](#), has called blandness. In a typically disappointing Guardian comment, he sings the praises of a man whose great merit is, apparently, that he does not upset people unless, that is, they are on what he describes as the left. Behr seems to think that opacity as to purpose and meaningless as to goals are sufficient criteria to lead the UK at present. My obvious question in response is to ask why it is that our ambition is now so impoverished?

The obvious answer to that is that neoliberal politics has won. In place of decision making, which requires that politicians make choices between conflicting aim, the criteria of maximising financial well-being irrespective of the distribution of the gains has been adopted. This corrupt form of utilitarianism defines a decision criteria, but only to the extent that it passes the responsibility for decision-making to markets that are in practice entirely indifferent to the consequences of their actions, about which the politicians passing the responsibility to them are happy.

The clearest indications that this is what Starmer and Reeves are doing are the adoption of fiscal rules that are deliberately intended to incapacitate the decision making powers of the government, and the outsourcing of economic management of the economy to the Bank of England, whose behaviour is the very clearly callously uncaring as to its consequences.

In this context, the welcome of Natalie Elphicke into Labour Party ranks was another clear indication of the total abandonment of principles inherent in this policy. Who cared that her comments on migration have appeared racist? What does it matter that she is anti-abortion? What is the problem with her having supported her sex-offending ex-husband? Why worry that she has persistently supported the increase of inequality in the UK? She believes in the power of markets. Isn't that enough?

For Labour, right now, apparently it is. The question is, however, whether it will remain that way.

Starmer is banking on Reeves to deliver his blandness, whilst claiming that nothing else is possible. But will people really believe that we can no longer afford good government, which is the premise that underpins what Labour is now saying? Will people, quite rapidly, reach a point where they will declare that enough is enough? A failing NHS, a shortage of drugs, a collapse in the quality of education, the continuing decline in the justice system and simultaneous demands for increasing taxation, which Rachael Reeves plans will inevitably require, could create a breaking point. Mr. Bland could be rumbled as a failure on the scale of Sunak remarkably quickly if this is the case.

When, or if, that happens, a number of things will occur. One is that people will no longer accept the assurance of the great and good that the management of climate change can be deferred, which is what the Royal Society is apparently still trying to do by still refusing to condemn the role of big business in the creation of this calamity.

People will also refuse to accept that in the country, where stock markets are at record highs and private wealth is growing, with more than £15 trillion of assets supposedly controlled by the wealthy, we can no longer afford to provide the most basic elements of public services that were apparently deliverable when the country was poorer.

People will also refuse to accept that money is the sole decision criteria to be used when it becomes apparent that the trade off is between balancing a Treasury spreadsheet and the death of one of their loved ones.

Perhaps most significantly of all, as it becomes obvious that the failure to act on climate change represents a risk to every single child, from whatever background they come, the demand for action from the government will become overwhelming.

To put it another way, the demand for principles, for apparent and accountable decision criteria, and for actions that are consistent with them, will become the political demand. It will become clear that blandness delivers nothing, offers no hope, and has no solution implicit within it. It will then look like an aberration, a complete political miscalculation, and failure in terms of political judgement.

I very doubt it will require a movement to the left to achieve this outcome. The ongoing

failure of government will, by itself, be sufficient to make it clear that the abandonment of responsibility, which is implicit in Starmer's approach to government, is a rejection of the hopes and desires of the vast majority of people in this country, and beyond it, whose well-being is dependent upon the decisions that government makes, which he will be refusing to deliver. It will be a desire for competence, for responsibility, for caring, and delivery that will create change. Whilst a Guardian commentator can now think that the people of the UK want blandness, I do not believe that is sustainable. What they actually want is action in the face of failure, decline, stupor and indifference, which is what politics is delivering now, and which it seems neither Starmer nor Reeves have any intention of changing.

Tipping points happen. One will. Natalie Elphick's absurd welcome into the Labour Party will not create that tipping point, but it is the clearest possible indication of the moral void at the heart of the Starmer party project. That void will create a moment when the public will expect leadership, and Starmer will clearly not supply it. At which moment they will realise that neither of our political parties are delivering what we need. They then either move to the far-right or, more likely, they may clear that the failure of the neoliberal project, even if they do not use such words, has gone on for long enough and will demand positive change to deliver hope for the future.

Natalie Elphicke's defection, and Starmer's welcome that has been extended to her, is the clearest sign as to why his capacity to govern is so limited. That is because he does not have the most basic understanding of what is required to undertake that role, which is the capacity to make decisions based upon a transparent ethical framework which we usually describe as an expression of political preference. He has no such framework, and that is what will pull him down.