

The SNP needs leaders who do not embrace neoliberalism

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I wrote about the SNP leadership election in [my column in The National](#) yesterday. I was not endorsing any candidate. I certainly do not think that is within my remit. I did, however, express concern about some of them. John Swinney and Kate Forbes were my particular focus of concern, as former finance ministers for Scotland.

As I put it:

To see John Swinney and Kate Forbes emerge as the front runners in the current SNP leadership race was troubling (though Forbes has now said she will not run). To describe their similar approaches to economics as conventional is to be kind. Their experience has, of course, been framed within the environment of Holyrood, where the Government has no choice but to balance its books, but to date, neither has shown the imagination or leadership that would suggest that they are even aware of the different, and necessary, economic approaches that could be adopted if independence was achieved.

As I also suggested:

It is fair to say that this failure to understand the ways in which the economic potential of Scotland might be unleashed is troubling, and that it is appropriate to say so because of the adoption by the SNP leadership of what I might describe as a "central bankers' view" of the economy. That approach does not represent a source of hope.

The Scottish independence movement, in which at present the SNP is the largest political party, might have the short term goal of controlling the Holyrood parliament, inadequate and inappropriate as its powers are. But that, many think, should not be its primary focus. The goal of recreating Scotland as an independent country has that status.

In that case breaking Scotland from the shackles of neoliberal thinking should be very high on its agenda, and yet it keeps getting leaders who seem more than happy to embrace that approach, and make Scotland suffer for it. I do think it my responsibility

to point this out in my column, and I wish the SNP, as a whole, took notice.