

Funding the Future

Article URL

Published: January 12, 2026, 7:35 pm

I have [already this morning](#) discussed the idea that the Tories have failed because people have realised that they have not delivered on their rhetoric, let alone their promises.

I have also discussed the idea that Labour will fail over the next five years for exactly the reason.

In both cases I am quite sure of my case. The reason is that both parties are profoundly neoliberal, and neoliberals are quite certain that government cannot deliver. As a result, when they secure office they set out to deliver on that belief, and as such will always disappoint an electorate that thinks that not only should government exist, but that it should do so for good reason, and should deliver as a result.

To explain this requires that I revisit an explanation of just what neoliberalism is. George Monbiot did [this very well in 2016](#), and although he has a new book out on this theme, I doubt that he will do much better than this:

Neoliberalism sees competition as the defining characteristic of human relations. It redefines citizens as consumers, whose democratic choices are best exercised by buying and selling, a process that rewards merit and punishes inefficiency. It maintains that “the market” delivers benefits that could never be achieved by planning.

Attempts to limit competition are treated as inimical to liberty. Tax and regulation should be minimised, public services should be privatised. The organisation of labour and collective bargaining by trade unions are portrayed as market distortions that impede the formation of a natural hierarchy of winners and losers. Inequality is recast as virtuous: a reward for utility and a generator of wealth, which trickles down to enrich everyone. Efforts to create a more equal society are both counterproductive and morally corrosive. The market ensures that everyone gets what they deserve.

He added:

We internalise and reproduce its creeds. The rich persuade themselves that they acquired their wealth through merit, ignoring the advantages – such as education,

inheritance and class – that may have helped to secure it. The poor begin to blame themselves for their failures, even when they can do little to change their circumstances.

He also said this:

Neoliberalism was not conceived as a self-serving racket, but it rapidly became one. Economic growth has been markedly slower in the neoliberal era (since 1980 in Britain and the US) than it was in the preceding decades; but not for the very rich. Inequality in the distribution of both income and wealth, after 60 years of decline, rose rapidly in this era, due to the smashing of trade unions, tax reductions, rising rents, privatisation and deregulation.

That, pretty succinctly, summarises what the neoliberal thinks. In particular, neoliberalism is defined by what it is against (the rights of most people) rather than what it is for.

What that means is that we get what I described as ‘cowardly politicians’ in my 2011 book, *The Courageous State*. Whenever neoliberal politicians identify a problem they think that government intervention will only make matters worse. They think the market can solve the problem that market failures, inevitably, created. They therefore walk away from anything of real concern declaring it nothing to do with them: it is for the market to address.

They are wrong, of course. But that does not matter to ideologues. Keeping the true faith is all that matters to them. And so we get Labour offering policies virtually identical to those the Tories have failed with over the last fourteen years. They seek to justify this by claiming, utterly bizarrely, that ‘stability is change’. Read that as meaning ‘nothing is going to change’. And it can’t. The shared neoliberalism of the Tories and Labour guarantees that.

This is why I can say with some confidence that Labour will fail to deliver as the Tories have failed to do so over the last five years. If Labour does almost the same things as the Tories did and uses the same excuses for inaction that must be the case. This is what seems likely.

Given that the far-right are essentially in this same mould, they too cannot deliver the government people in this country desire.

The consequence is that only someone, or some coalition of parties on the left, can deliver what people need now. Only they can break the hegemony.

I am not saying I know how as yet, given all the problems inherent in first-past-the-post and given that electoral pacts are exceptionally hard to negotiate, but sometime soon those who do want to break this exceptionally disruptive behaviour by our two leading

parties will have to agree on how to do so. This is the true work required of the next parliament.