

Labour is a moral void

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For those unaware of it, Labour suspended the whip from seven of its MPs last night after they voted against the King's Speech because it did not include a commitment to end the two child benefit cap.

Let me just take some facts here.

The two child benefit is thought likely to be a major contributing factor in at least 330,000 children living in extreme poverty in the UK , and more than 400,000 other children living in poverty.

These figures do, of course, ignore the impact of this poverty on the parents of those children.

The cost of this cap is thought to be £1.7 billion, but the Labour front bench appears to have mysteriously increased this sum to £3 billion.

That said, as I noted on Twitter last night, child poverty in the UK could be eliminated by [ending the higher rate tax relief on pension contributions that the wealthiest](#) in this country enjoy, saving almost £15 billion in tax reliefs for those wealthy people as a result, with about £12 billion then being left over to end other Tory abuses of those in need, such as the bedroom tax and the absurd rules in the carer's allowance that have turned it into a nightmare for many.

Starmer and Reeves have, however, turned this issue into a virility test. They are determined that maybe 730,000 children must suffer so that they can demonstrate their commitment to making Rachel Reeves' spreadsheets balance, even though that exercise in spreadsheet balancing is, in itself, an exercise in pure economic dogmatism.

Seven MPs subjected to this dogmatic refusal to relieve poverty. As most of them explained on Twitter, they represent constituencies where the rate of child poverty is very high. It is more than 45% in some of their constituencies. They believe they have a duty to represent the interests of children in the places for which they are Members of Parliament. For doing so, they have had the Labour whip suspended.

I believe those MPs who

voted in accordance with their consciences in an attempt to relieve poverty amongst children in this country did the right thing last night.

I believe Starmer and Reeves have made a gross error of judgement. Not only do they prove that they appear to be governing in the interests of those with wealth, coupled with indifference towards the needs of those in poverty, but they have shown that they will also pursue a Tory policy rather than make the changes that one would expect of a supposed Labour Party. I do quite genuinely wonder how the burden of such actions on their consciences lets them sleep at night. If they did not seek power to relieve child poverty, what is the point of them having it?

I had low expectations of Starmer and Reeves before they got into office. Now, I have none at all. They have made clear that they wish to maintain benefits for the wealthy whilst penalising the poorest and most vulnerable in our society so that the rich might prosper. There is no form of morality that I know of that can justify that behaviour. It is as if the Party now exists in a moral void.

I stand with the seven suspended MPs as a result. I rather hope they never go back.