

The Tory leadership candidates redefine what a motley c...

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The Tory leadership race has begun. The choice looks likely to be between:

- * James Cleverly
- * Kemi Badenoch
- * Tom Tugendhat
- * Dame Priti Patel
- * Mel Stride
- * Robert Jenrick
- * Suella Braverman

I have some immediate thoughts.

The first is how dire these options are. I would not want any of them as headteacher of a school, let alone Leader of the Opposition.

Second, none will excite the public. Some (Cleverly, Tugendhat, Stride and Jenrick) will bore them rigid. Patel might also be in that list.

Third, Patel, Braverman and Badenoch persistently come across as extremists. Jenrick would, too, if only he could come across as anything.

Fourth, at this moment Labour must be laughing themselves silly at the idea that they might have to face any of this lot.

Fifth, so too will Farage, for whom each of these is an open goal. That is especially true of Braverman, who would, I think, stand aside for him.

Sixth, Labour's desire to become the UK party of the centre-right is made all the easier to achieve by such a motley crowd.

But, and this is the most important point of all, this leaves the social-democratic left wide open, with a vacuum waiting to be filled. We may be living in rotten political times, but the chance that things could be better has to exist when things have got this bad.