

# There's a void at the heart of Starmer's government whe...

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I re-read the speech Starmer [gave yesterday](#) before writing this post. I wanted to be sure I was being fair. I am left with a number of impressions having done so.

First, there are some warm words about aspirations that any politician could have said. There was nothing to distinguish them as being original or indicative of a particular political ideology.

Second, there was blame. He has forgotten the election is over. Like Boris Johnson before him, he has already forgotten that once the election is won, the job is to govern, not whine.

Third, it was intensely managerial. The claim is that Labour will be very busy. Doing what, apart from setting up the GB Energy private equity fund and turfing prisoners out of jail to make room for new inmates, is not clear. Being busy is easy, though. It's being useful that's the hard bit about governing.

Fourth, the overwhelming theme is that it is going to be very hard for Labour to deliver what the Tories promised. There is, supposedly, a £22 billion shortfall to do that - although given the nature of government accounting, this figure is by no means reliable, and I might even suggest it to be wrong. But there is no aim to go further. All the moaning and groaning is about how hard it will be to deliver the dire level of services to which the Tories aspired. There is, apparently, no margin at all to make things better.

So what does Labour want to do? In a nutshell, it seems that they want to deliver the plan Jeremy Hunt and Rishi Sunak set out in the spring. That seems to be it. Only to do so, they are going to make children living in poverty suffer, pensioners suffer, and the users of public services wait, even though, as a result, some will die, and children will lose out on the education they need. As for global heating, it's as if that is someone else's problem.

What Starmer made clear was that there was a vacant space in the middle of his

government where leadership, thinking, strategy and understanding should be. Instead, there are just moans about 'tough decisions' as if he, for some reason, thought being prime minister was going to be easy.

Being prime minister is never meant to be easy. It requires the holder of the office to think, and that is something few people want to do precisely because genuine reflection to determine right outcomes on the basis of ethically held values is never easy.

The trouble for us is that I do not think that Starmer and Reeves ever realised that this is what might be asked of them. That is partly because there are no clear signs that they have ethically held values. It is partly because there are no signs that they can really think. Instead, they believe that the roles that they think their roles are technical, managerial and functional when that is the job demanded of the civil service - with whom they are necessarily required to disagree on occasion, which I strongly suspect is something that has not occurred to them.

There is, then, a void at the heart of this government. That was always likely. After two months in office, that is now very obviously confirmed to be true. And there is no room for compromise with that technocratic thinking that simply seeks to deliver the Tories' strategy, at best.

We can do better. Describing what is possible is, I suspect, the role that this blog will take on.

Doing so, it will do two things. It will say what is possible. And it will show it can be paid for because Labour need have none of the problems it has if only it had not dug deep pits for itself into which it might fall before the election took place by declaring in advance that almost every known funding option on which it might call would be closed to it.

Now that the summer is over, it is time to get on with that.