

Labour hasn't got a story to tell

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All of life, including political life, depends on our ability to tell stories about who we are, what we are, what we think and what we hope for. In that case you would have thought Labour would have defined its story about what its latest iteration is by now, but it hasn't. As far as I can see, it has no story to tell about what it is, what it believes and what it is for. No wonder it is in a mess.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlvp5ISUIdM&si=QWoAzPveHOJ7xli9>

The audio version is here:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=ir4s6-16d8f6f-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=c73a3a&font-color=&logo_link=episode_page&button-skin=ff6d00

This is the transcript:

Labour hasn't got a story to tell, and that really matters.

The way that we as human beings understand life is by telling each other stories. The way we even understand our own lives is dependent upon the way we tell our own story to ourselves and to others.

There is, after all, no absolutely certain fact about most things in life. Everything comes down to the way we see things, the way we interpret them, the way that we choose to

understand them, and the language that we use to explain them.

And these things will also change over time. You know that if you retell a story, it won't be the same as last time. And that's okay. That's what humans do. This is how we seek understanding, not only of ourselves but of each other and the world all around us. Therefore, stories are one of the most powerful, if not the most powerful thing, that defines us as a human being. Because without those stories, well, we're nothing. Are we human? I ask the question in all seriousness.

And that matters when it comes to politics. Because over history, politics has of course been about storytelling.

We can go back not that long ago and quite clearly define the stories that were told by our major political parties. We had the Conservatives, who were basically there to maintain the status quo and all the power structures within it, which had an implicit bias in favour of wealth.

We had Labour, who arose out of the Methodist Church and the trade union movement, and were there to have a bias towards those who were working people. That was its purpose, and that was what it wanted to achieve when in power.

We had the Liberals. What were the Liberals for? They were there to ensure that liberal ideology - a flexibility about the choices that we could make about the ways that we lived - were respected by society.

And if we go to other political parties, well the SNP were in favour of independence, although there are plenty of its own members at present who question whether that is still the case with regard to Scotland.

And let's look at Plaid Cymru, much the same story, but I think, in that case, still being lived.

And with the Greens, again, by and large, we can identify the story.

But can we identify the story for Labour anymore? That was my opening question and the point that I will now return to. Does Labour have a narrative that helps us understand what it is doing? And my answer is simple and it's straightforward, and as far as I'm concerned, the answer is no. I can't identify a narrative within what Labour is saying.

And that is deeply troubling. Because without a narrative, Labour hasn't got a reason to bind its own MPs to what its leadership is doing, let alone bind its party to what it is doing, let alone persuade us that what it is doing is right.

That storytelling. is what politics is all about. But if you can tell me what Labour is about right now, good on you. Because I honestly do not know.

It seems to be in favour of wealth. It's refusing to increase taxation on wealth, for example. But that is not the story which Labour has ever told before.

It appears to be in favour of means testing. But by and large, Labour was the proponent of universal, non-means-tested benefits.

And Labour would appear to be in favour of privatisation now, and yet it was once the party of nationalisation.

It's a deeply confused place to be if you're a Labour minister, let alone a Labour MP or member of the Labour Party at present, because there's nothing to bind you to a narrative, and that's what worries me about the next five years.

Unless Labour has got a narrative that will underpin its time in office - and five years is a long time to be in office - then there will be no cohesion as to what it is going to do, no identifiable delivery that will make it clear that this explains their purpose, and no story to tell at the end of this which will give them a chance of re-election.

I would prefer, all things considered, that Labour was re-elected in 2029, if they last that long, than the Tories were re-elected, simply because I saw what the Tories did between 2010 and 2024. It was not good. I would prefer they don't return.

But right now, unless Labour is capable of developing a story about what it's going to deliver, I don't see any chance that it's going to return to office at that time, and we could return to Tory rule with all the mayhem and confusion that appeared during that era.

I'm troubled by all this.

I wish Labour did have a story to tell.

I wish it would tell it.

But at the moment, it appears they are clueless as to what that narrative is.