

Funding the Future

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With a Cabinet made up of supposedly highly qualified graduates, all of whom would claim to have a social conscience, you would expect Labour to be able to think critically about the solutions required to the problems created by fourteen years of Tory rule. Right now, however, it seems that there is not one critical thinker amongst the lot of them. No wonder they're already in such a mess.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79naHT6Mtis?si=Xb0K46NFpNWspjw2>

The audio version is here:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=6xabq-16dc264-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=c73a3a&font-color=&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=ff6d00

This is the transcript:

Why can't anyone in Labour do critical thinking?

Critical thinking is what everyone in Labour should be able to do, because almost without exception, Labour ministers would appear to have been to Oxford University and done a degree in politics, philosophy and economics. And having done so, you would expect them to have been taught about critical thinking.

Now, let me tell you what critical thinking is, and I'm going to quote from Monash University in Australia, who described critical thinking in this way:

Critical thinking is a kind of thinking in which you question, analyse, interpret, evaluate, and make a judgment about what you read, hear, say, or write.

The term critical comes from the Greek word *kritikos*, meaning able to judge or discern. Good critical thinking is about making reliable judgements based upon reliable information.

I would have put it slightly differently, but however I would have expressed it, I would have come to something very much like that.

That is what critical thinking is about. So let's summarise it in a different way, and I've got six bullet points to do that. Critical thinking requires:

- * that you clarify your thinking purpose and context.
- * You then have to question your sources of information.
- * After that, you need to identify the arguments that are in play
- * And then, you have to analyze sources for those arguments.
- * After that, you evaluate alternative arguments that might be available to those which first drew this subject to your attention.
- * And finally, you have to create your own argument based upon all the views that have been presented.

Now actually, I would clarify that last one and say you have to come up with an alternative solution to the problem, which is why you were thinking about the issue in the first place, because what's the point of thinking about anything if you aren't looking for a solution to a problem? That's my belief in life.

So, we would expect people in Labour to be able to undertake that type of exercise. And yet, day in, day out, we see evidence that they appear not to be able to do so.

If they could think critically, would they have, for example, decided to withdraw the winter fuel allowance and create all the furore and backlash as a consequence to save just £1.5 billion of revenue cost as a consequence? The answer is no, they wouldn't.

If they had really thought before the election that we were going to face a financial crisis, which was, let's be honest, forecast to exist by absolutely everyone from well before that election took place, and most especially since March, when Jeremy Hunt made such a bodge of the last Tory budget of the last government, then you would not have imagined that they would have boxed themselves into a corner in the way that they have by guaranteeing they would not increase income tax, national insurance, VAT, and so on, meaning that as a consequence, they were left with almost no room to manoeuvre within their budget strategy. And yet that's what they did.

You would not imagine that if they were genuine critical thinkers, they would have ended up with the Tory's strategy on migration. Because very clearly, the Tory's strategy on migration has failed, but what we get from Keir Starmer at present is, "we're going to beat the boats", which is exactly what Rishi Sunak said, and which

didn't work, and which never will, because the migrants are going to keep coming, because getting hold of boats across the English Channel has obviously turned out to be not that hard, and there's no great incentive for the French to stop them. None of that should have been any great surprise to Labour, and yet apparently it is.

And, as a consequence, they keep digging holes for themselves because they're unable to imagine the consequences of anything that has apparently happened, let alone has been said, or which might be done, or to interpret the arguments and consider alternatives, which is what critical thinking requires. So, they make mistake after mistake after mistake, and they're only a couple of months into office so far.

Is this going to change?

I wish it would, but when you have people in charge like Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves and Wes Streeting and Lucy Powell, who made the claim that the UK economy would collapse because financial markets would no longer support it if Labour did not take away the winter fuel allowance, then you have to wonder about these people's capacity to think, let alone think critically.

I would expect our politicians to be amongst the best thinkers in the country. And I will be honest, there were a lot of thinkers who I didn't agree with when I was a young man who were politicians, but who could nonetheless undoubtedly think critically. I think of some of the titans of that era, Denis Healey and Michael Heseltine, even, who could stand back and look at a problem and interpret it. These people were genuine thinkers, and there were plenty of them, but there are no such equivalent thinkers now. Whether you liked Roy Jenkins or not, there's no one of his intellectual calibre that I know of in the House of Commons at present, and nor is anyone coming through the ranks who looks likely to be that type of person.

And this is deeply worrying because if they can't think well, they can't govern well because the whole task of those at the top of government is to think. After all, their job isn't to implement, that's what the civil service does. Their only job is to create strategy. And strategy requires critical thinking, and they can't do it.

And in that case, and unless there's some form of radical Damascene conversion to critical thinking amongst Labour ministers over the next few weeks, frankly, I think we're heading for a disastrous five years of Labour government. And I really wish that wasn't the case.

Why can't they remember what they were taught at university?

Or did they not pay attention then, any more than they don't seem to pay attention to anyone now?