

Optimism, RIP

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Am I alone in remembering what optimism looks like?

In light of the dire performance of our new UK government, there must be millions of others in this country who also look back on that sentiment with nostalgia but with little hope that it might return at any time soon.

By nature, I am a mix of both a pessimist and optimist. I usually presume the projects that I am involved with will go wrong, firstly because that makes me work harder to make sure that they don't, and secondly because that protects me from disappointment if they do despite those efforts.

On the other hand, despite the evidence that suggests I might be wrong, I continue to presume that most people are generally good-intentioned and that our politicians might even want the best for us. I do now sometimes wonder for how long I can maintain this expectation.

We knew that the Tories were rotten to their core. Their protestations to the contrary were utterly unbelievable. Almost no one was deceived. The wish of vast numbers to be rid of them was fulfilled at the general election.

No one can suggest that I was enamoured with what Labour was offering before the election. Just read a few of my blogs written in the run-up to that event to remind yourself of just how bad I thought things might be. The only problem is, they are much worse than I ever imagined.

Incompetence is apparent almost everywhere in this government.

Any pretence that it is green and cares about climate change has already disappeared.

Ethics have been abandoned when it comes to Israel, to whom arms sales are continuing despite the obvious inappropriateness of that action.

Every commitment to undertake tax reform that might, even marginally, have reduced

inequality in this country now appears to be in doubt as to delivery, but the least well-off are being punished, nonetheless.

The claim that there will be growth to fund change looks even more ridiculous now than it did in opposition.

Every day, it seems as if Rachel Reeves bows down even further in homage to the power she thinks financial markets have over her.

And there is not the slightest hint in this government's very busy but almost pointless legislative programme to suggest that the core problems of inequality, poor housing, economic hopelessness, educational underachievement, failing medical and social care and a collapsing justice system are being addressed.

I never expected much of Keir Starmer. But even I expected something to differentiate his government from the total shambles that preceded it. Right now, I am struggling to see that difference.

Of course, the mistake might be mine. Why should I have ever presumed that one neoliberal politician who was replacing another would really make a difference when the aim of both was simply to maintain the existing power structures within our society that so obviously favour a few and oppress most people?

My mistake was to, deep down, still believe that somewhere or other the Labour label might imply that some bias, however small, might still exist towards economic and social justice. But it doesn't. It is simply not there. There is nothing at all within this iteration of what is called a Labour Party but is not even remotely anything of the sort to suggest why it might be that change is likely.

The elevation of Morgan McSweeney, the person whose only role in life appears to be the elimination of anything remotely left of centre from the party, to be Starmer's chief of staff is proof of that.

And so, after 100 days in office, we are left hopeless, served by a government that is without purpose, comprehension or competence, and which is, because of its absence of courage, very obviously able to do harm.

No wonder my optimism has disappeared. There is no justification for it left. And that's very worrying given all the issues that we really do face.