

Funding the Future

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Young people are giving up on democracy because our politicians are giving up on them. But it's not democracy that's at fault - it is our politicians who are. We need a politics that delivers for young people, or the future is very bleak.

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This is the transcript:

Do young people really want a dictatorship in the UK?

A recent opinion poll suggested that 50 per cent of younger people in this country would be happy to give up democracy in exchange for a strong leader of the country. And to some extent, I understand why.

Let's be clear, politics as it is, has failed young people. Politicians, as they are in our major political parties, are lined up against their best interests. And those politicians universally claim there is nothing they can do to change the fortunes of those younger people who will, in the future, be the determinants of who governs this country. And that's worrying.

Why is it worrying? Because if people look to extremism as the answer to their problems, they're looking in the wrong place. As a matter of fact, we live in communities, and communities require compromise in order to work.

Communities are inevitably made up of people who disagree with each other, who have different perspectives, different needs, different wants, different attitudes. And if they are, however, to coexist as a bunch of people who will live in the same space, it is necessary that they find common ground. A strong leader is not the person who can do that if strong leadership means we will take one view and eliminate the views of all those who oppose us.

But why is it that young people have reached this situation?

Let's look at their perspective on this issue. They're treated really badly. Education has very largely failed young people. It teaches them things they don't need to know and subjects them to an examination system that is brutal, all because they're being prepared as cannon fodder for the commercial market.

Is there education for life? No.

Is there education on things they need to know, like finance and budgeting? No.

Is there preparation for the realities of actually living together, whether that be with a partner or in community? No. This is treated as peripheral.

So, too, are the things that very often matter to young people, from music to the arts and everything else that makes life good.

All is abandoned in the face of having to solve a simultaneous equation without ever explaining why you might need to do so.

So, education is not the type that young people need as it is offered today. And if they go to university, they're charged extortionately for a substandard education that most universities now have to supply because they do not have the budgets to put sufficient lecturers in front of classes or in seminar rooms. That, again, sells young people short and leaves them, of course, in a lifetime of debt that, therefore, reconciles them to the subjection to the market that they then come to expect is their lot and which they see no way out of.

What else happens? If they aren't able to work, the benefit system is absolutely lined up against them. It is incredibly hard to survive.

If they happen to have a child, they know that there's a 25 per cent chance that they and their child will live in poverty because that's how the statistics are looking at present. And they're getting worse everywhere in the UK, except Scotland, where they're improving just a little bit.

So, the things that people want aren't there, including, of course, housing. It is virtually impossible for most young people to get access to housing now, at least their own house, unless they have a 'bank of mum and dad' behind them, and that is increasing divisions in society.

For those who have to live in tenanted accommodation, life is very difficult. Insecure, and if they were to have a family, absolutely unstable with regard to that child's well-being because of the likelihood that they will have to move.

All of these things are known to young people. They are aware that this is what is stacked against them. And they look at our politicians, and quite reasonably, they come to the conclusion that they're incompetent.

Because they are. They are incompetent. And they've chosen to be incompetent, which is what really offends me. Under the neoliberal system, they have said that whatever the problem is, they cannot solve it because the market would do better than they can, and therefore, they walk away from every problem they're faced with.

Just take Rachel Reeves as an example. I often do at present, but it could be somebody else, and it could have been a Tory in the past, because it really makes very little difference. Rachel Reeves says we have a shortage of growth and says she promises a third runway at Heathrow.

Heathrow hasn't got a plan for a third runway at present.

And Heathrow hasn't got the money to deliver a third runway at present.

And it's not at all clear that we'll need a third runway by the time it comes into place, which will be sometime in the 2040s at best because by then, we will realise that we will not be able to fly as much simply because climate change won't permit it and the effects of climate change will be all too obvious, as young people know, but Rachel Reeves appears not to.

Is it surprising, therefore, that young people have rumbled that she's offering them, well, what is politely called a pup, - something that cannot work? It is literally words without meaning.

And they know that. They're not stupid. And I like the fact they're not stupid.

What I do want, however, is that we offer them a real solution to the problems that we have and not this myth that a strong leader, who I suspect at present they identify as Nigel Farage, is the alternative.

I suspect they might also associate with Trump.

And young men are known to be heavily influenced by Andrew Tate, who is a vile

character, deeply misogynist, and deeply racist, and yet attracting a lot of support from young men, but unsurprisingly not nearly so much so from young women.

We need to have role models of politicians who believe they can deliver.

Who can deliver social housing because if houses aren't affordable people need social housing with long-term secure tenancies in which they can live knowing they have a home.

We need to have decent wages to prevent the curse of poverty, which is afflicting far too many families.

We need to have proper training for jobs.

We need to have a situation where people are not treated as expendable, and far too many are in the workplace at present. And the government is doing very little to really address that fact.

We need to remove the curse of student debt, which makes it impossible for people to also have a mortgage and save for a pension. And of those three, the least important is student debt.

We need to have a benefit system that recognises that young people are sometimes genuinely incapacitated and therefore need support from society while they deal with the problems that they face before they might ever be able to return to the workforce.

We need to take young people seriously.

We need to address their needs.

We need politicians who are willing to stand in their shoes and not say, 'Pull yourself together, get out there and do something', which is the standard response at present, because that's not fair to young people, because there isn't something they can do out there, because the market, which is worshipped by these politicians, has denied them the opportunity to achieve for themselves.

We need a state that, in other words, does help the people who most need it. And that always requires that the state be biased to the poor. And in any society, some of the poorest people will be the young because they haven't had a chance to accumulate any wealth. They haven't had a chance to get on the pay scales and progress up them. They have not had the chance to actually create stability in their lives and need assistance to do so.

Young people are rightly angry with our politicians. I am angry with our politicians. Why shouldn't they be?

It's time that our politicians realised that unless they radically change their approach to the economy, to being politicians, to the treatment of young people, and to the treatment of people who need support from society, then there is no chance for us all and we might end up with something as bad as Trump.

Is that what the likes of Keir Starmer, Kemi Badenoch, Ed Davey and others want for the UK? I fear it might be because they're doing nothing to address the real problems that we have.

Real problems created by neoliberalism.

Real problems that oppress real people.

Real problems that deny them hope and opportunity.

Real problems that are driving them towards extremists.

That is why we need political reform in this country. We need it for the sake of young people. And I want to offer those solutions that might appeal to young people on this channel because I believe it is our duty to deliver them a future of the type that they deserve