

Burnham v Starmer: it's not hard to decide

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The [Guardian's editorial today](#) begins with a long evisceration of Keir Starmer and his caution, before noting:

Andy Burnham, sketching a different course. His “Manchesterism” sees national control of the essentials: housing, energy, transport, water. He wants prices regulated via public coordination to keep costs low. He says long-term borrowing should be used to build the social stock. He is unafraid to float another [£40bn](#) for social housing, or to dismiss “bond vigilantes” as arbiters of affordability. On the continent this is normal politics. In Britain it marks a bracing break with the post-1980s consensus.

The irony is that Sir Keir once [campaigned](#) on a similar programme: public ownership, higher taxes for the wealthy and a Green New Deal. One by one those promises were abandoned as high office came into view. What remains is cautious orthodoxy. Mr Burnham is offering Labour members what Sir Keir once promised, before discarding it. That is, no doubt, why “Manchesterism” appeals to members and unsettles Downing Street. It is not nostalgia for municipal socialism, but closer to European models of [interventionist](#) capitalism: [taming costs directly](#), rather than waiting for markets to deliver. The contrast is stark. Sir Keir sells continuity. Mr Burnham’s ideas offer rupture. The question for Labour conference is which future the party wants.

This, I stress, is an editorial, and not an op-ed. The paper appears to have moved against Labour, or at least Starmer.

Let me put this in the context [of the piece I have published this morning](#) on Plate, the cave and the Overton window.

What The Guardian is saying is that Starmer is determined to play in the shadows of archetypal neoliberal thinking projected on the back of the cave that the media has constructed for us. Burnham, in contrast, wants to at least turn towards the light and the big, wide world that we have to address.

It's not hard to decide in that case, is it?