

Funding the Future

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Are all our major political parties now the same? Labour, Conservatives, the Lib Dems, and even Reform are united by one ideology: neoliberalism. Fiscal rules, austerity, and the “household analogy” bind them together into what I call the *Single Transferable Party*.

This is why public services are always cut, inequality deepens, and investment is suppressed—no matter who wins an election.

In this video, I explain why UK democracy has been hollowed out, why real choice has disappeared, and what alternatives—like proportional representation and ending fiscal rules—we must fight for if we want genuine change.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ba2PF_bR4yQ&si=_PB13WYERmTqHqdM

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=zqb9j-197f214-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

Everyone says "All politicians are the same", and I've got to agree with the people who say that. The fact is that we now live in a political system where almost all our political parties say things which are almost identical, as if they're frightened to disagree with each other.

I call the resulting mess of political parties that we've ended up with "the Single Transferable Party". The Labour Party, the Conservative Party, the Lib-Dems to a large degree, even the SNP a bit, plus Reform - just in case you think they're different - they all deliver the same basic script, which is based upon their economic belief in austerity, fiscal rules, and neoliberal economics.

There isn't a cigarette paper to put between these parties when it comes to these issues. It's as if neoliberalism has guaranteed that every single political party in the UK offers near enough the same political agenda, and whatever happens in an election, policy stays the same.

Public services are always cut.

Investment is always suppressed.

People always end up without the benefits that they need.

Inequality always deepens because there's no attempt to tackle it.

There is no wealth taxation.

And the same failed economic narratives continue.

Elections are not delivering real change, and we're even seeing this between the parties who are not in power.

So, Labour and the Conservatives delivered the same agenda. We now know that. We wondered what Labour would do when it won in July 2024, because it never set out a plan before it got elected, and then we discovered it was just going to continue what the Conservative Party had done.

Now they're in opposition, the Conservatives are offering us what Labour is doing.

The Liberal Democrats do have some minor differences. They are very much more, for example, in favour of Europe than the other parties. But at their core, they too are a neoliberal party accepting the constraints that are imposed, like austerity, fiscal rules and everything else that goes with it.

But let's just mention Reform. There's no difference in political ideology between these parties and Reform. Reform is also a neoliberal political party. A bit more of an extreme neoliberal party. One that is indifferent as to the suffering that it could create for people by pushing the boundaries a little further with regard to, for example, removing benefits, removing pensions, cutting government spending, reducing the amount that is spent on the NHS, education and so on, but at the core, an exactly similar party to all the rest.

And even when it comes down to something like migration, there is now, as far as I can see, almost nothing to choose between the Labour Party, the Conservatives, and Reform. They're all, for example, talking about expelling the same people from the UK.

This is profoundly worrying.

Single Transferable Party is held together by the glue of neoliberalism, and it exists. It's real. We haven't got proper choices in our democratic system unless we move outside the mainstream. The Greens are definitely not in this arena.

Nor is Plyde Cymru in Wales.

And nor would the SNP be if its members really had a say about where the party is going. And there are other choices in Scotland, the Greens and Alba, which are not neoliberal parties.

The point I'm making is that unless you go outside the mainstream, there's just one political agenda.

Markets are treated as masters.

The state is treated as the problem.

Fiscal rules reinforce this by pretending there is no money.

And the household analogy that demands that the state be managed as if it is a household, even though the state has the capacity to make money, which of course, no household ever has, carries on as the underpinning of what all these parties say they believe, and probably in practice do believe.

First-past-the-post just reinforces all of these problems. What it does is require that all the parties play to what they call the centre ground, although in my lifetime, that centre ground has moved very much to the right. When I was a young man, it was social democracy that was in the centre ground, and the Conservatives were moving towards that position. They too ran a welfare state, and with it a true commitment to ensuring that nobody was left behind.

Now we have parties who are determined to work on the basis that those who cannot look after themselves are left behind. That is their new orthodoxy, and it is the Treasury orthodoxy of frugality and austerity that is what bounds the debate on these issues.

We are told that there is no money.

We are told that the books must balance.

We are told that this is prudent.

We're told that anything else is irresponsible.

And we're told that those parties who are talking about alternatives, and I've already mentioned them, are not to be elected because they would threaten the stability of the country when the stability of the country is already obviously imperilled by the actions of the Single Transferable Party, whichever one happens to be in power.

The result is that these parties do whatever they wish. They follow the Treasury mantra. They deliver austerity, and party members and voters are locked entirely out of any form of meaningful influence on the outcomes.

The consequence is that our democracy is becoming an empty ritual, and that is what people are saying. This is why they're saying it doesn't make any difference who I vote for because they're all the same. And the people who say that are right.

Go out into the streets, and most of the time you'll find that the public knows what's really going on and how they're being abused.

They also know how the economy is going and how it's being abused, and they know how to put it right.

They know that we cannot suffer a further decline in public services.

They know that infrastructure is crumbling.

And they know that inequality is worsening.

And they want action to deal with all those issues, just as they want urgent action on things like climate care, and housing and education.

Voter cynicism and extremism are growing in the vacuum created by the Single Transferable Party, but let me assure you, Reform are no answer. They will not be changing anything. They might, if anything, make everything very, very much economically worse for the people who are already despairing.

And the fact is that in this situation, what is called the Overton Window, the area of political possibility in which the political parties think they must offer their manifestos to the public, is shrinking.

Only neoliberal options are now called credible. But the consequence of that is what I've already been explaining.

Politics is reduced to managerialism, and there is no vision left.

Democracy is hollowed out from within and from above in such a situation, and there is no choice made available to us in any case unless we take the risk of voting for

somebody outside the mainstream.

So what can we do about this? Well, those mainstream parties must follow the path which is being promoted by the non-mainstream parties.

They must abandon fiscal rules. They must be recognised for what they are as tools of political constraint.

We need, in the UK, to look at proportional representation because it is very clear that most people are getting no chance to get their voice heard in our political system, and we desperately need new ones.

Party democracy must be rebuilt. We're seeing the charade of party democracy at the Labour Party conference this week, where the leadership instantly ignore any vote they don't like. And we'll see exactly the same at the Conservative Party next week. And the Liberal Democrats might be a bit better, but only a bit.

The fact is debate must shift from finding money, which is what everybody talks about, and which every journalist talks about, to finding resources; finding the resources to build what we want.

The Single Transferable Party at present has no interest in building that future. That's why we have to name it for what it is. It is a party of austerity by choice, and it is not a party that wants to deliver opportunity for people. It's only when we look at alternatives and we reject the economic myths on which the Single Transferable Party is built, and reform the system and demand accountability that we will have elections where real choice is offered in the UK, and that's what we really need.

So what do you think?

Do you think all our political parties look remarkably the same?

Do you think that even Reform is very similar to our other political parties?

Do you think that they're all offering the same political agenda?

And do you want something different?

Let us know. There's a poll down below.

Poll

[poll id="219"]

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