

## Is the new politics about to be born?

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I was talking to an old friend, Tony Groves, of the Echo Chamber podcast, based in Dublin, on Friday, largely because I was recording a session with him.

We were, as social media types do, discussing trends in views, listens and reads, and we both agreed that something extraordinary is going on.

He is getting traffic levels typically only recorded during general elections in Ireland, and there isn't one happening right now. And, as I noted yesterday, this blog has just recorded its best-ever month. We are also having an exceptional month on YouTube and, unlike last November, Trump has not been elected to boost the figures. So, we asked each other, both before we recorded and during the recording, what is going on?

My answer was that maybe that moment between the old dying and the new being born, which Gramsci wrote about in his Prison Letters way back in 1934 (if I recall the date correctly), is nearly over.

I did, in fact, use the metaphor of birth in the podcast recording. I joked about the packed bag in the hall, which is a phenomenon familiar to many expectant parents, having been picked up. Our political economy is now moving to the point where the new has to be born because, just as the unborn foetus inevitably cannot remain in the mother, so the new politics we need cannot be deferred. In some form or another, it simply has to arrive.

That being said, Farage might just be suffering the unluckiest (or, from my point of view, fortunate) of timing because he might have peaked too soon:

- \* His councils are not delivering.
- \* His racism, or at least the accusations regarding it, are beginning to stick.
- \* He is clearly on the defensive.
- \* And he is beginning to realise that with the potential prospect of power in sight, he can no longer talk the absolute nonsense that he has done in the past and retain any

credibility.

If that is the case, the hollowness of his offering will become painfully apparent.

In fact, it might just be that by the time we get to 2029 – and I suggest we will probably have to wait that long for an election, because although Labour will ditch Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves long before then, their successors will hang on to the bitter end as all failing governments do – there will have been, as a consequence, a two-year-plus period where:

- \* a melting pot of new ideas might be created,
- \* real policy alternatives might be generated,
- \* new and very real political alliances could emerge, and even
- \* new politicians might become familiar faces.

I was not foolish enough to suggest I know what will happen.

Nor am I pretending that the threat from the far right is disappearing: I am acutely aware of the reality of the presence of neo-fascists within our political spectrum at present, whether in Reform or the Tories, who are not far behind.

But I am also profoundly encouraged by the evidence that people in Scotland and Wales realise that they have independent voices, and are willing to support them. I hope that continues.

In England, three things are encouraging.

The first is the rise of the Greens. I am aware of the burden this places on Zack Polanski, and I can only hope he can withstand the pressure. I knew Caroline Lucas throughout the entire period when that pressure fell on her. It was a heavy load to carry. Let's not pretend otherwise. But something is happening with the Greens that is very good news, even if not everything in their economic policies is as I would wish as yet.

Secondly, whilst I have never been a Lib Dem by conviction, they not only now have a significant presence in Parliament, which looks like it will be sustained because support for them in some parts of England does look to be very strong, but they have also developed a critical voice, focused around several people within their leadership, many of them are women, which is very good to see. Right now, I think that there is very little prospect of their support declining in the seats they already hold because people who have already given up voting for Labour or the Tories are not going back there, and Reform will not persuade people who have voted for the Liberal Democrats to ever vote for the far-right.

Third, and I regret having to say this, the attempt to form an alternative left-wing party by Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana is very obviously failing, as the total chaos of this weekend has proved. I think this is, to some degree, unfortunate, but it means that the likelihood of a serious alternative left-of-Labour party undermining any position that Greens can promote at the upcoming election is very low. If we had proportional representation, I might regret that. But when we have first-past-the-post, this may be an unfortunate, but nonetheless simultaneously beneficial outcome.

So, what battles are to be had?

Firstly, everyone needs to battle fascism, whether that be from the Reform Party, the Tories, or the likely merged party that may be created out of the two of them. This country cannot afford a politics of hate.

Secondly, everyone should ignore Labour. Governments are never voted out of office. They always implode, and from the position where Labour is now, there is no chance of it retaining power. Their credibility is shot, especially when the alternative leaders look as though they might be drawn from the ranks of the current incompetent Cabinet, many of whom have marginal seats.

In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the answer is straightforward: voters need to support the party that is most likely to support independence. That party may not be the one that you would ideally support, but that is not the point. The message now is that these parties are the hope for these countries.

That then leaves the other parties in England. By other parties, I now mean the Greens and the Liberal Democrats, although there could still be another party that emerges, but unless it does, the country has a realistic choice between the Liberal Democrats and the Greens. Younger, more radical voters may look to the Greens. However, as I have noted, the LibDems have good reason to think they will keep the seats they have. These two could, then, be running neck and neck, but not competing against each other very much because their strengths might be in different seats.

That said, I am most definitely not suggesting that the Greens and the Liberal Democrats should, as yet, be considering any form of electoral alliance. We do not need that at this moment. What we need is a debate about what must be done to deliver outcomes for the best interests of the people of this country. Those need to focus on:

- \* Breaking the stranglehold of the City
- \* Delivering homes for young people, in particular
- \* Protecting those in need
- \* Creating sustainable climate change policy
- \* Investing in failing infrastructure

- \* Addressing inequality, and
- \* Rebuilding a Union, whether Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland are in it, or not.

Can these parties do that? I hope so: we might well depend upon them doing so.

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