

# Politics for People and the political economy of care: ...

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One of the reasons why debate here at Funding the Future has focused so heavily on issues around the term **the politics of care**, and its potential replacement by the term **politics for people** in the last few days, is that I have realised several things as a result of events we are witnessing this year.

The first is that events are moving very fast, with the politics we have been used to for decades being increasingly discredited, almost by the day. Mandelson is just the latest in a long line of so-called politicians who actually look far more like amoral grifters than anyone who deserves to be in government, who have helped deliver this outcome.

Second, this is not, of course, just a UK phenomenon. Trump is bringing mayhem, chaos, fascism and Gestapo-style policing to the USA, with unknown consequences, although we can already be sure none of them are good. The need for a different narrative in that country, which the Democrats seem, so far, unwilling or unable to deliver, is very strong.

Thirdly, the work I am doing is attracting a lot of attention. I have mentioned little of this explicitly here so far, and doubt I will do so much as yet, because nothing concrete is happening, so far, and so no risk of conflicts of interest is arising, but the number of organisations asking about the availability of my advice seems to be growing very rapidly. Those enquiries are both from within and well beyond the UK. This adds urgency to the requirement to formulate what I am saying in a more structured fashion, as soon as possible.

Fourth, that has concentrated my mind on turning what I am producing into a book, either for a mainstream publisher (please form an orderly queue) or to be self-published, which may be my preferred option, not least because that process is much easier to control and vastly quicker.

Fifth, we realise that those same ideas now need a new organisation and plan for our YouTube channel, and both James and Tom are keen to provide the backbone for that.

So far this morning, I have explained [the background to our new thinking](#) and have [introduced the term](#) **Politics for People**, which we plan to use as an overarching description of what we are trying to develop. I have not yet introduced our redefinition of neoliberalism as the political philosophy we primarily oppose. That is because I felt it would be more useful to summarise the foundations on which **Politics for People and the political economy of care** are built before doing so. I had actually been working on these ideas for a while as part of my thinking on the politics of care, and they have now been adapted to this new formulation. Comments on what follows are welcome.

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## **Politics for people and the political economy of care: the core principles**

### **1 - Care is foundational, not residual**

Politics for people begins with a simple truth: well-being and care for people are not added once markets have taken their share. They are the conditions that make everything else possible.

People cannot work, learn, create, or participate democratically unless they are cared for when young, ill, disabled, ageing, or simply exhausted. The political economy of care, therefore, treats well-being and care for all not as a discretionary cost, but as essential social infrastructure. Any political system that seeks to minimise care spending is, by design, destructive. Politics for people does the opposite: it provides for everyone.

### **2 - Interdependence replaces the myth of independence**

Politics for people rejects the fantasy of the self-sufficient individual.

We are dependent across the whole life course: children on adults; adults on public systems; the healthy on the sick; the present on the future; the elderly on the young; communities on one another; nations on other nations.

The political economy of care, therefore, designs policy around relationships and mutual reliance, not around isolated economic agents and issues assumed to exist outside society's reach.

### **3 - The economy exists to sustain life, not the other way round**

In politics for people, the economy is a means, not an end.

Markets are tools. They are not moral authorities. The political economy of care insists

that economic activity be judged by whether it supports well-being and whether it maintains social and environmental capital. Growth has no intrinsic virtue. It is acceptable only where it strengthens our collective capacity to care and protects ecological stability.

#### **4 - Care work is real work and must be valued**

Care has been systematically undervalued because it is labour-intensive, relational rather than transactional, disproportionately undertaken by women and migrants, and poorly measured by GDP.

The political economy of care recognises care work as genuine economic production. Politics for people, therefore, demands decent pay, secure conditions, and strong public provision where markets exploit or fail. It also acknowledges the vast amount of unpaid care that will never be remunerated, but without which society could not function.

#### **5 - Universal provision beats residual charity**

Politics for people rejects well-being and care systems based on luck, charity, or stigma.

Neither opportunity nor care should depend on family circumstances, accidents of birth, birthplace, postcode, employer goodwill, or punitive means-testing. Universal public services are not inefficiencies; they are the most reliable way to ensure care for everyone. The political economy of care, therefore, prioritises universal access to health and healthcare, education, housing security, workplace and income security, and social care.

#### **6 - Time matters as much as money**

Politics for people recognises that care requires time as well as funding.

The political economy of care challenges overwork, insecure employment, excessive commuting, and punitive welfare regimes that strip people of time and energy. Politics for people recognises that labour rights, working-time regulation, and income security are as central to care as hospitals or care homes.

#### **7 - The state enables care; it is not a household**

Politics for people rejects the household analogy for government.

A caring state does not ask how care can be afforded in narrow financial terms. Instead, the political economy of care asks what care is needed, what real resources exist, and how they can be mobilised without inflation or ecological harm. In the political economy of care, public finance is a tool for coordinating the delivery of well-being and care for everyone, not a moral constraint imposed on society.

## **8 - Democracy must work for people**

Politics for people recognises that care requires listening, responsiveness, and accountability.

As a result, it values lived experience alongside technical expertise, designs institutions capable of learning, and resists technocratic governance that treats people as data points. Politics for people and the political economy of care are inseparable from democratic participation and responsibility, which, in turn, must embrace them both.

## **9 - Care extends to the future and the planet**

The political economy of care is necessarily ecological.

Politics for people recognises obligations to future generations, non-human life, and the material systems on which all care depends. Environmental destruction is not an external cost; it is a failure of care across time. The political economy of care embraces ideas of duty, including to our planet and to those whom we hope will live on it.

## **10 - Care is a political choice, not a private virtue**

Finally, politics for people insists that care is not simply about kindness. It is about power, priorities, and institutional design.

Politics for people asks who bears risk, who receives support, who is protected when markets fail, and whose needs are treated as optional. The political economy of care makes these choices explicit. Pretending they are neutral or inevitable is itself an ideology.