

The NeoLiberal Democrats

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As the [FT has reported](#):

The Liberal Democrats have set out plans to replace the UK Treasury with a “Department for Growth” in Birmingham, in a bid to close the “yawning gap” between London and the rest of the country and boost economic fortunes.

Daisy Cooper, deputy leader of the centrist opposition party, said redesigning the Treasury — which is responsible for public spending, the tax system and financial services policy — would help “end the cost of living crisis” and “get Britain growing again”.

Let me be clear that I support breaking up the Treasury and curtailing its power. There are several good reasons for doing so.

Firstly, it is over-powerful, making the absurdly titled Chancellor of the Exchequer overly powerful as a result. This has harmed good government in this country for decades.

Second, the 'Treasury view', which has always embraced the household analogy, balanced budgets, and a belief in small government, has also been profoundly harmful to national well-being and might only be broken by breaking it up.

Third, the disconnect between the Treasury and the country has been deeply alarming. Rarely has such an insular view been so detrimental to well-being.

So, you might expect me to welcome this move.

I do not. It is deeply inappropriate. It reveals a fundamental lack of judgment on the LibDems part. It puts growth at the centre of its plans, and GDP growth, which is undoubtedly what is being referred to, has been and will continue to be a dangerous goal for the government in this country. I provided many of my reasons for saying [so here recently](#). Let me summarise them, briefly, again, though. They are that GDP growth:

- * Harms the planet.
- * Is indifferent to who enjoys the gains of growth.
- * Has not benefited the vast majority of the UK population for decades, as wealth from growth has not trickled down.
- * Has distracted attention from the real crisis in our economy, which is the rise of the serious, sustained, and inescapable poverty of many in the country.

GDP growth is, in fact, a pure neoliberal goal. It can even be said to be indifferent to:

- * The fate of the planet.
- * The fate of the poor.
- * Inequality.
- * Lives wasted in pursuit of meaningless activity that contributes nothing to human well-being

It is the goal that the LibDems are adopting. In the process, they have confirmed something I have long suspected, which is that they really are NeoLiberalDems, and that form of the politics of destruction - which is what neoliberalism really is - delivers just as much harm as do all the rest.