

Rejecting neoliberalism

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On Friday, Andy Burnham [said this](#) when accepting the leadership of the Labour Party:

Change starts with honesty.

We must recognise that this generation of politicians – myself included – have failed to challenge a political culture and an economic model that simply doesn't work well enough for ordinary people.

Four decades of the neoliberalism that began in the 1980s have not been kind to the places that built our Party, nor to the communities across the UK in rural and coastal areas.

Burnham claimed to reject neoliberalism, but words are cheap.

You cannot reject neoliberalism and remain committed to fiscal rules that embed it in your policy framework.

You cannot reject neoliberalism and maintain a commitment to Bank of England independence that sacrifices people, their jobs and businesses on the high altars of the City of London.

You cannot reject neoliberalism and remain committed to the private ownership of essential public services.

You cannot reject neoliberalism and do nothing to tackle the externalities that markets create, the impact of which we see in inequality, the environment, unemployment, alienated young people, lost communities and failing biodiversity.

You cannot reject neoliberalism and threaten, imprison, or seek to silence the views of those who oppose it.

You cannot reject neoliberalism and then appoint those who wish to embrace, advance and profit from it to positions of high authority in your Cabinet.

You can only reject neoliberalism by being seen to do so, by acting as if you have, and by taking the necessary and difficult steps to address the many harms it has caused, the existence of which you acknowledge, whilst accepting your role in creating them.

Andy Burnham needs to reject neoliberalism. Its toxic impact on our society is leading us to the edge of ruin. For too many, the ruin is already their daily lived experience. Nothing less than rejection will do.

So, the question is, does Andy Burnham mean what he said, or are meaningless words another form of neoliberal waste as far as he is concerned? I think we will find out this week.