Twitter Thread by Shaun Lawson



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No objections from me to Labour voting for the deal - despite my now being very much a Starmer sceptic. There are multiple reasons why Labour should vote for it.

1. We left the EU at the end of January. Leave v Remain has been done since then. Finished.

Some people like to act as though it's not. Even, almost as though someone can wave a magic wand and turn the clock back 5 years. Nobody can.

No doubt the deal will be renegotiated by future governments; that's when rejoining might become a possibility. But it's years away.

And no doubt, too, the Tories will have plenty of shenanigans up their sleeves to achieve what many of them REALLY want. Which is when, memo to Starmer, we'll need an effective opposition!

But right now, it's just about moving on.

2. Starmer's approach is to contrast Labour's apparent competence with the Tories' staggering incompetence. And to appear like a government-in-waiting - which means 'the national interest'.

It's wearisome I know. But most of us on here are far more political than most people.

Most of the electorate do not think like you or me - and we're way past time to stop pretending that they do. Most of the electorate aren't very political at all - but they do want competence, and they don't trust parties they think are unpatriotic.

They pay most attention around election time - but without certain basic things, they won't give anyone a hearing. Basic things which include:

- Appearing patriotic
- Backing the police and the armed forces
- Governing in the 'national interest'

No matter how they behave, the Tories will always get a free pass on all three. Get a reputation as an early riser, and you can stay in bed til noon.

On all three, Labour's position wasn't just bad under Corbyn. It's been worsening for a long, long, long time.

3. Frequently, it's cited on here how many working class voters Labour have lost since 1997. Those who note this seem quite spectacularly oblivious that this hasn't just been about economics at all. It's been about social attitudes every bit as much or even more.

Under Blair, Labour turned increasingly socially liberal. Older working class voters didn't like this one bit; it all added to their sense that "these people don't understand me or my life". This intensified under both Miliband and Corbyn.

And FPTP being what it is, social conservatives are massively over-represented; social liberals are piled up in safe seats.

What I'd have done if I were Starmer is turn Labour into a post-Remain party, and seek a progressive, anti-Tory alliance. I despair of his lack of vision.

What he's doing instead is the only thing he can do under FPTP: reaching out to social conservatives.

Does this run the risk of social liberals fleeing? You bet it does. But we can't win without social conservatives. Not under FPTP.

So he supports Black Lives Matter but only quietly; he doesn't support illegal behaviour of any kind, however powerful the cause behind it; he backs the armed forces, even when that involves the most egregious things; and he wants to show that Labour have changed.

Which means, I'm afraid, backing the deal.

"How's he gonna win the Red Wall back? He's a Remainer!" He's already winning it back by pursuing this approach. And you can't win it back while remaining as socially liberal as Labour has been for decades.

Am I enthusisastic about this? Nah. I'm depressed about it. But it's what FPTP does. Don't hate the playa; hate the game.

Without those foundation stones in place, Labour won't get a hearing.

And while I want to keep this rejoinder as gentle as possible, you cannot constantly lambast Blair for losing working class voters, demand we reach out to working class voters... then condemn Starmer for doing precisely that.

So many on here can't handle what that involves.

In that, they're just a representation of what the Labour Party now is. Because much of this is against our values.

And THAT's why we've lost so much working class support. Because our values are not their values. Our values are those of the new working class: the young.

Both Corbyn and Miliband were locked in the FPTP nightmare of trying to hold together a voting coalition which is essentially impossible to maintain. Even in 2017, the Red Wall had almost gone; most of the MPs we on the left most loathed WERE THE MOST SOCIALLY CONSERVATIVE.

Starmer's taking a completely different direction. It's probably the last time that trying to win under FPTP will even be attempted by Labour.

We couldn't win when we were too liberal; we'll have big problems winning by being much more Blue Labour.

Sunak, in particular, will peel a certain kind of affluent liberal off. He'd be a very different kind of proposition to Johnson.

What do we need? A progressive alliance. That's what we should all be campaigning for in my book.

But when a party offers its most left wing manifesto since 1983, and loses poor voters by FIFTEEN POINTS, it has to reflect. That's what Starmer's done.

You can't argue "we lost because of Brexit", then attack him for, er, supporting it.

But the incoherence of that critique is just a symptom. FPTP does not reflect what the public wants in any way. It's breaking the UK apart and turning England against itself.

Leaders with vision would recognise that. Starmer's just doing what he can within a bankrupt system.

One final thing. Call it a thought for the day.

I remember how I felt when reading the 2019 manifesto. How awesome I thought it was - because it made me feel so comfortable.

I remember @graceblakeley actually saying that she'd cried tears of joy when reading it too.

But then I thought to myself: "Shaun - what do you, a privately educated, Oxbridge educated child of north-west London - or Grace, a privately educated, Oxbridge educated child of the home counties, have in common with much of the electorate?"

The answer is very little.

Maybe it shouldn't be that way. And it's no slur on her: she's brilliant and will go very far.

But by and large, it is that way. I'm just another London social liberal - and my views are not in the majority in the UK, or anything close to it.