

Labour's Unfortunate Winning Recipe

By Theodore Dalrymple

No government could have deserved to lose an election more than Rishi Sunak's in Great Britain. Unfortunately, it does not follow that because a government deserves to lose an election that the opposition deserves to win. It is a persistent illusion among voters, however, that because things are bad, they can only get better. Alas, they can usually get worse—much worse.

The Conservatives, in power for the last 14 years, have been spendthrift, incompetent, directionless, frivolous, and corrupt. They seemingly believed in nothing and stuck to nothing. On their record, it would be hard or impossible to say what they stood for, except for hanging on to office.

The incoming Labour Party has more principles, but bad ones, which is probably worse than having none. Its leader, Keir Starmer, is a former human rights lawyer, a field of activity that combines advocating for the supposedly downtrodden with [making an excellent living](#): a hint of what is likely to come.



In the run-up to the election, Starmer said that the new government would not tax working people further. Pressed by a radio interviewer to define what he meant by “working people,” Starmer said that he meant people with no savings, who therefore had to rely on public services. This was extremely revealing as to his underlying beliefs about how a society works, or ought to work. Apparently, people with savings were not, in his estimation, working people. What were they, then? Having declared himself to be a socialist, presumably he thought that they were all exploiters, who aspired to live by rents or returns on capital, having accumulated in their lives what socialist economists call surplus value. The true citizen was he who was dependent on the government and could arrange nothing for himself.

Except, of course, for the employees of the government itself. By happy coincidence, Starmer had arranged for himself (by Act of Parliament, no less), a special dispensation exempting him from rules concerning the amount of money a person could put into his pension without incurring additional taxes. After

practicing as a human rights lawyer, he had been, for several years, Director of Public Prosecutions, and thus a public servant. His ideal, then, would be a government of the nomenklatura, by the nomenklatura, for the nomenklatura.

A greater number of wealthy people, proportionately, are already fleeing Britain than from any other country in the world. The taxes they pay will be lost, making it imperative to tax even further the prosperous who remain—that is to say, the diminishing number who wish neither to join the nomenklatura nor depend on the government. Eternal electoral victory for Labour beckons, on an alliance between the nomenklatura and the working people, in the Starmerian sense of the phrase.

Nevertheless, Britain's new prime minister could soon face a crisis of legitimacy. His "landslide" victory was such only because of the system of first-past-the-post in constituency elections, giving him an unassailable majority in Parliament. But Starmer received the votes of only [34 percent of those who voted](#), who were themselves only 60 percent of eligible voters. This means that he will govern on the basis of the positive choice of just over 20 percent of the adult population, not exactly a popular mandate for radical experimentation.

The road to hell is paved with human rights lawyers.

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