



There's nothing pragmatic about centrism?

## Description

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Tony Blair and Andy Burnham

Pragmatism does not mean grifting. Pragmatism is a serious philosophical movement. At its heart is a definition of truth. It seeks an honest answer to the question, "Does this work, and what practical difference does it make in our lives?"

If it's a short-term gain at a long-term cost, it is not pragmatic. If it enriches a small group of people at the cost of serious economic damage, it's not pragmatic. At least not in the context of a democratic government.

Pragmatism is one of the most abused words in politics. What should mean, "Will this work?" is weaponised to mean, "I'm scared to challenge vested interests" Or worse still, "I'm going to do something unpopular with the public, but my donors will love it. I'll call it making tough decisions" The real word for that is cronyism

## The return of the crypt keeper

Tony Blair has popped up out of his box again to tell Labour how pragmatic cronyism should be done. But there was nothing pragmatic about the Iraq War 179 British service personnel killed. 3,598 wounded 487,000 civilian deaths West Asia plunged into turmoil for decades. Was it pragmatic to get £13 billion of NHS PFI investment at the cost of £80 billion? How about failing to regulate the banks, and the subsequent 2007-08 crash?

Now he says increasing carbon emissions is a good idea after Saudi Arabia gave him £9 million He thinks handing over our public services to unregulated AI firms is a spiffing idea. It's pure coincidence that he's been offered £257 million from global AI giant Oracle

Blair, like his best mate Mandelson, is one of the most brazen [£5 million undeclared personal gift](#) from overseas crypto-billionaire Christopher Harbone has nothing to do with Reform's policy of tax cuts for crypto-billionaires. The [other £22 million](#) Harborne donated to Reform was just a coincidence, apparently.

## Burnham's pragmatism

I read [an article](#) yesterday that accused Andy Burnham of changing his positions. It's widely reported that:

- he's [backing Rachel Reeves's fiscal rules](#)
- he's [reversed his position on support for refugees](#)
- he's [abandoning some trans rights](#)
- he's [changed his position on the EU](#);
- he [won't take water companies into public ownership](#) but have stronger public control.

I [saw a comment](#) that this is pragmatism. Sometimes people say "pragmatic" when they mean "timid".

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If Andy was bold, he'd win big. [Polling shows](#) that for a reason people will not vote Labour is "I don't know what they stand for" followed by "being incompetent, being out of touch, and not trusting their promises. None of this will be improved by U-turning.

## Funny how it's always pragmatic to be right-wing

Left-wing policies are always popular. [74% support](#) mass council-house building. [77% support](#) wealth taxes on billionaires. [82% support](#) public ownership of water. And despite the media reporting and hordes of online bots, [77% of Britons](#) agree that transgender people should be protected from discrimination.

So the establishment attack the messengers. Left-wing politicians lack profile, media experience, and a track record of being in government. They get smeared before anyone can look at their policies. None of that applies to Andy Burnham. He already has massive recognition. His high personal ratings are based on his current image people see him as "left-wing".

He does not need to tack right. He won [62% of the vote in Makerfield](#) in the 2024 Mayoral election. Voters know him independently of his red rosette.

Voters would love it if he said:

I will bring water back into public ownership, and the companies that have been squeezing us dry will not get bailed out by tax payers.

Or if he said:

I'll build a million council homes so everyone can have somewhere secure to live. I will tax billionaires. I will bring in PR, no ifs, no buts. I will protect the most vulnerable and stand against division. Black or white, gay or straight, cis or trans, old or young, able bodied or disabled, I will invest what it takes to build a Britain that leaves no one behind.

If he spoke like he did outside Bridgewater Hall in October 2020 [when he stood up against the Tory government](#) he would win Makerfield at a canter.

But that's not what he's doing.

## After Starmer

The collapse of Starmerism has handed him an opportunity that almost no one in politics ever gets. He could remake Britain. It's on a plate.

What's the pragmatic path? Listen to the [Labour Together](#) advisors, take the path of limping centrism, and lose the general election in three years time? Leave a legacy of crumbling public services, rip-off utilities, and stunted life chances for millions?

Or stand and win on a common sense programme that's broadly popular. Then start to fix what needs fixing. Win a second term and lift millions out of poverty, heal division, and give everyone security from cradle to grave.

Bravery is pragmatic.

*Featured image via the Canary*

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