

UK Election: Anticipation and Afterthoughts

Keith Rankin, 11 May 2015

Last Thursday's British election (7 May) result was a surprise to just about everyone in the United Kingdom. But not to me. I correctly anticipated the result on 23 April ([United Kingdom General Election on 7 May](#)), and on 2 May ([First-Past-the-Post will be the Winner on the Day](#)).

The Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) gave an indication of the left-populist anti-austerity approach that UK Labour will need to follow if it is to have future success. Certainly their London-left approach cannot get Labour back into government. Nor can a 'Blairite' approach. David Cameron does Blairism better than Tony Blair ever did.

Looking more broadly, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) now represents the middle ground, much as NZ First does here. While 'First Past the Post' denied UKIP seats, it still represents over 12 percent of frustrated voters who Labour must be able to speak to. The SNP did speak to these voters in Scotland.

Labour has to find a policy programme that will draw UKIP voters. This is not impossible, but requires a shift in their mindset. Politics is, more than anything, a numbers game. And, as well as votes and seats, those numbers include personal pounds or dollars, not the esoteric and ultimately meaningless government Budget balance.

Japan, where they see government debt as a solution - a natural complement to private savings - rather than a problem, has got half the recipe. The other half of the recipe involves reframing the 'redistributive welfare state' into a distributive welfare society.

We note that the words 'redistributive' and 'state' are essentially pejorative; they represent negative framing on the part of the plutocratic right. Further the normal English meaning of the words 'welfare' and 'benefit' is simply 'what is good'. But, under plutocratic framing, these words have come to mean 'hand-outs to the improvident'. Much of the problem arises from such framing of the language of public discourse.

It may only require public accounting reform to unveil a distributive welfare society. Such reconceptualisation around taxes and benefits can open the door to possibilities in the medium-term future that most of us cannot yet see; we cannot see these possibilities because the door to the room that holds these solutions is closed.

One big problem here is that public accounting reform involves intellectual numeracy, and most people who identify with the left are number phobic. So is the mainstream media. The challenge for the left is to make public accounting concepts sexy.
