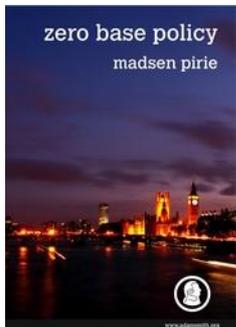


[Zero base tempts Labour](#) [1]

Written by [Dr Madsen Pirie](#) [2] | Wednesday 26 September 2012



Three years ago I published a book entitled "[Zero Base Policy](#), [3]" proposing that the UK needs to examine not just how institutions and practices might be improved, but what their purpose is, and what policies might achieve that purpose. I wrote:

Government usually continues to do what it has previously done, even in areas where the current policy has visibly failed to succeed. Sometimes there is tinkering, with government promising "a fresh approach," but in reality offering little more than minor adjustments at the margins. There ought to be a "zero base policy," under which government would ask in each area what it was trying to achieve, what would count as success, and what policies might conceivably help to achieve that success.

I went through areas such as education, health, the police, drugs, civil liberties and taxation, asking the fundamental question and suggesting policy avenues that could lead to more success than current ones.

It is very refreshing to see front-benchers from the Labour Opposition starting to endorse this radical approach. First Stella Creasy, and now Ian Murray have given interviews in which the 'Zero Base' approach has featured prominently.

This is excellent news, and it is just what opposition parties should be doing - using their time out of government to look with fresh eyes at the nation's problems and come up with radical solutions. All too often governments ask "What is being done and how can we tweak it to improve it?" A more fundamental question is "What should government be doing, and what policies might enable it to do that successfully?"

Britain faces serious problems, and it is plain to impartial observers that in some areas policy has simply not worked. The fresh approach of 'zero base' promises new and radical solutions, and its endorsement by some on the Labour front bench is to be welcomed.

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