



## Never waste a good crisis

The world seems to be heading for the worst crisis since the Great Financial Crash seventeen years ago. Throughout history, many crises have led to significant social improvements by exposing deep societal flaws and forcing reforms which ultimately proved beneficial for the poorer classes: Bad King John's disastrous wars in France led to Magna Carta (which consolidated the rights of the barons) but more relevantly two years later, the Charter of the Forest which secured some degree of social and economic justice for commoners; the Black Death in the mid-fourteenth century empowered the surviving peasants and led to collapse of the feudal system that had oppressed them for hundreds of years across much of Europe; the Great Depression followed by the horrors of the Second World War focussed the attention of Britain's leaders on five major problems affecting their citizens, namely want (caused by poverty), ignorance (caused by a lack of education), squalor (caused by poor housing), idleness (caused by a lack of jobs, or the ability to gain employment) and disease (caused by inadequate health care provision), leading to the founding of the welfare state, the National Health Service and mandatory provision of free education for all.

Since then, the rich and their enablers have become more adept at protecting their own narrow interests with the 2008 financial crisis exacerbating rather than mitigating wealth inequality: the top 20% of UK households now hold 63% of the country's wealth compared to the bottom 20% with 0.5%. Progressives like Gordon Brown and his Labour Party administration wasted a crisis that looked like bringing the global economic system down altogether: the measures implemented were all about preserving and perpetuating this imbalanced regime rather than curing its ills. And a lot of even these milquetoast "solutions" have been rowed back on now under disproportionately strong pressure from the very perpetrators that brought on the crisis on all of us.

Rachel Reeves is now facing her own dilemma, having to prepare for a war-ready economy by cutting welfare spending, raising taxes or doing both; all at the same time as stimulating growth and sticking to discredited fiscal rules that only serve to indulge the markets. Last time she needed cash, she raised it by hiking an unfair, anti-growth tax on work but perhaps now, with a genuine global crisis to deal with, she could go back to the position she expressed in 2021 "that people who get their income through wealth should have to pay more".

The key asset which generates wealth is property and notably the land it occupies with well over half of UK Net Worth corresponding to land value. The Labour Land Campaign advocates an annual Land Value Tax as used to be the central plank in Rachel Reeves' party's fiscal policy. While the small minority of citizens who would lose by the judicious introduction of such a simple, fair, unevadable and economically efficient tax have very loud voices, a time of such national and international crisis may be an opportunity to make them voices in the wilderness; let's not waste it. ENDS

***The Labour Land Campaign is a voluntary organisation working for land reform.  
It advocates a fairer distribution of land wealth through a Land Value Tax.***

For more information see [www.labourland.org](http://www.labourland.org)

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