

In government you are meant to work for everyone, not just your supporters

Consumer confidence has fallen. Investors are putting off new projects. Landlords are selling up. Shareholders are taking gains while they can. That's what two months of things can only get worse from the government does. That's what leaving open so many possible tax rises does as people fear they will be taxed into financial difficulty.

Newspapers and media fuel the downbeat mood with item after item asking who might the government come after? There is a mighty long list as there so many groups Labour seems to dislike. Will they come for landlords, savers, people wanting a decent pension, the self employed, the drivers, the rich, the high earners, all the successful, the strivers, people with good homes, energy companies, banks, small businesses, large companies?

If you want growth and more investment that list is the list of people and companies that will do most to deliver it. It is a bad idea to let them all fear the budget. In three months many of the super rich will have gone to homes elsewhere and will have signed the papers to pay their taxes to other governments. Many of the well off will be well advanced with plans to move away or with better legal ways of placing their savings at home to reduce the coming tax bill. Many strivers will strive less or take early retirement, deterred by the likely higher tax and growing hostility to running a business or renting out property.

The government message seems to be "I warn you, do not work for yourself, do not save too much for your retirement, do not build a successful company or invest successfully. The government will be out to tax you."

Labour is still an angry opposition to Conservatives. It needs to become a government.

Once you are in government with a big majority and a mandate for change you are responsible. The electorate knew what they didn't like about the former Conservative government and sent it packing. They did so by half the 2019 Conservative vote abstaining or voting Reform. Labour now has to prove it can govern better. It has to earn the huge majority first past the post delivers when one of the two main parties sees its support collapse.

So far we have an Opposition with a majority. How is the economy we ask?

Broken they say. Will you make it better? No, it will get worse.

How is the NHS we ask? Broken they say. Can you fix it? It is going to take years they reply. The plans of how to do it are still secret.

How will you get growth we ask? By delivering huge amounts of investment in wind and solar power they say. How will you do that and afford that? The Secretary of State sends an urgent letter to National Grid demanding a plan to get to net zero and asking how much it will cost. Listening to Labour in the election they had worked all that out in 14 years in Opposition.

How will you stop illegal migration we ask. By appointing a new Border Commander and working with the French authorities they reply. We do not need an offshore processing centre or destination for illegals they assert. The last government had tried both those options. Why have numbers been going up over the first three months of the so called new policy?

How will you deliver the promised £300 off home energy bills we ask? Domestic energy is about to go up 10%. Firms putting in new renewables or running back up gas power stations will need to make profits from higher prices. The government seems to be dropping the £300 pledge.

How will you clean up politics as promised we ask. We will bring in a rule against donors buying us all expensive new wardrobes of clothes after they have given us an initial makeover they reply. We will say Unions giving us loads of money has no bearing on our employment law changes, they chirrup.

It's time Labour behaved like a government. You defend what the government is doing or you set out a detailed working plan of how to fix problems. You are proud of what the country is doing and highlight success, not look for everything bad to run down. If something needs improving then fix it.

What are acceptable gifts to MPs and Ministers?

In the last Parliament I had a policy of not accepting gifts or paid for hospitality at sporting events or expensive concerts. I did not ask for or receive payments for articles and media appearances about U.K. politics. I paid for my own clothes and entertainment and for my own election leaflets in 2019.

An MP is on £92,000 a year and does qualify for expenses when living away from home to do a job which requires you to work both in Parliament and in the constituency. I find it difficult to know why an MP would think it a good idea to accept the gift of expensive clothes when it is bound to lead to a huge debate about the suitability of them and the motives of the donor. It is

also debatable whether accepting invitations to expensive entertainments is wise.

Clearly if you are Prime Minister or a Cabinet member then some great events require your presence as office holder. A PM should be seen at a major sporting final with a U.K. competitor. A culture Secretary needs to attend a wide range of events to take an interest in the sector. A Foreign Secretary needs to do plenty of international travel and attend grand events. An MP should attend Remembrance Day and other civic occasions in his or her official capacity if invited.

We are not debating official and accepted roles and support, but discussing how some MPs pursue personal pleasures in a privileged way, getting a freebie because of their office but not undertaking an official duty at it.

Different and tighter rules apply to Ministers than to MPs. Ministers make decisions. Many people want to influence them, either in a specific case like a grant of a licence or planning permission they need, or in a general tax or regulatory change they would benefit from. I remember as a Cabinet minister being invited to join rich people on their expensive boats in the Mediterranean with flights paid to join them. I used to reply that I was busy as a Cabinet Minister so could not join them but would be pleased to be invited when I was no longer in the cabinet. Although they assured me they were not just inviting me because of my position I got no updated invites once I left the government.

A Minister of course compromises themselves if they accept expensive leisure activities with rich people. A Minister also invites suspicion if they meet and wine and dine with leading billionaires without coming clean if the billionaire influenced them to support their drive for net zero or vaccination or more EU or whatever global cause they are promoting.

Rich people tend to press Ministers to do what the governing elites of the world and the international treaties require. The elites usually get what they want without financing the leading politicians, because the whole net zero, world health and wars approach is baked in anyway by international law and international get togethers anyway.

The collapse of the EU battery car market

The latest August figures for the sales of battery cars in Europe show a big drop of 44%. The market share of battery cars has shrunk to just 14% with a fifth of those who bought one saying they may well switch back to petrol or diesel. The EU, like the U.K. was assuming battery cars would now be approaching a quarter of the market, with complete phase out of new petrol

and diesel 2030 to 2035.

As some of us have been warning for years too many of us think battery cars are too dear, their range too limited, their recharging too difficult and their future likely to include new taxes to replace lost fuel duty. The second hand values are often poor causing depreciation problems for those financing peoples purchases. Hire companies report lack of demand with Hertz cutting back on its use of EVs.

The EU and the U.K. need to think again about their manic policy of ending their successful petrol and diesel car industries before there is a dominant market for battery cars and before the U.K./ European industry can make affordable ones to compete with the much cheaper Chinese products. The EU and US have ironically decided to impose heavy tariffs to try to stop people buying affordable Chinese vehicles, whilst the U.K. with its import everything government mentality welcomes cheap Chinese cars in to knock out our home manufacturers.

These latest figures show an urgent need to change policy and stop the attempted demolition of the existing vehicle industry.

Wokingham's MP splashes the taxpayer cash so others do the work

The Treasury have drawn attention to the £20 bn black hole in national finances thanks to the collapse of public sector productivity this decade. You would have thought every new MP would want to show how they can help do more with less to start the fight back for higher productivity and better value for money. Not so in Wokingham.

The new Lib Dem MP has advertised under a Lib Dem logo five well paid posts to do his job for him. I assume these are all taxpayer paid Parliamentary staff, yet they go out under the Lib Dem logo. One of the posts is for a "Campaigns Organiser and Communications Officer" to "work for Wokingham Liberal Democrats organising campaigns and volunteers for the MP and local elections and for the MP's Parliamentary office on communications on constituency non party political matters." Surely such a post should be a Lib Dem volunteer or party funded staffer if the MP can't be bothered to do it himself?

He wants a speechwriter and drafter of Parliamentary amendments, questions and interventions. He needs a Chief of Staff to sign off constituents letters he cannot be bothered with, and to run the enlarged office. He also wants a Senior Caseworker and a Caseworker, more normal assistance. He is offering a maximum combined salary of £214,401 with a salary of £36,744 up to £ 52 ,793 for each job depending on the post gradings. There will be other staff costs

on top of the salaries. It sounds as if this will all be paid by the taxpayers.

As the MP he replaces, in the last published year 2022-23 my spend on office staff was £101 ,873. I employed two excellent people.

I did all my own research, wrote all my own speeches and my daily blog to communicate, drafted any bill amendments and questions, kept myself up to date with Parliament's agenda and with my constituents. I did any local campaigning myself alongside Councillors and volunteers. My two staff did a great job replying to constituents following discussion with me about the incoming queries . They ran the Parliamentary diary and worked with local institutions and people over meeting arrangements and events. They followed up and resolved difficult cases with local and national government officials. I dealt with the Ministers and Councillors where necessary to try to get a good outcome.

I could not have found full time work for 5 staff and have no idea what I would have done with my time if someone was doing my research, identifying and running campaigns, communicating with press and public as well as doing all the casework and signing my letters for me. Surely we should expect more from an MP on a good salary. The productivity of the Wokingham MP office has just halved at a time when everyone in the public sector should be striving to improve it.