

Don't forget the middle

Labour claims to stand up for the poor, the dispossessed, the unemployed and the unfortunate. The Conservatives seek to show that many Labour policies would in practice damage them, as they would damage the economy as they memorably did in 1975-9, and in 2007-9. Fewer jobs, less growth and more unemployment as they produced do not cut poverty. Conservatives have sought to show that they too want to help those most in need, promoting work whilst supporting welfare. In government Conservatives have pursued higher minimum wages, less tax on those on lowest incomes and a range of other measures. In the leadership election there are furious bids by various candidates to set out what more can be done for the poorest in our community.

Amidst all this politics someone needs to stand up for the many who are not on higher incomes but who earn enough to get little or no benefit help and who have to pay substantial tax bills. Mrs May seemed to understand this in her early comments as PM about the "just managing", though there was a danger this language was a bit patronising and downbeat. What we need is a vision of how the many who work to provide for themselves and their families can aspire to higher incomes and better lifestyles feeling the government is on their side rather than seeing them as an audience to tax and regulate in pursuit of wider social goals.

I want the next government to take the taxes off aspiration. Why do we face such high taxes on buying a better home or on moving to a different location? Why do we have to pay such large taxes if we want to buy a new or better car? Why does the government charge VAT on various home improvements? Why does the government want to reduce the number of people working for themselves by claiming they are not truly self employed for tax reasons?

There are limited ways out of low income and no assets. To do it people usually have to buy a home of their own and spend time and money on improvement. The range of tv programmes about moving and home improvement point to the interest in this opportunity. People do need to keep a decent proportion of their work income, to reach the point where they can afford to save. Building your own business is one route to a better lifestyle with assets in your business. It should be feasible for the average person, not needing super human skills to run the gauntlet of regulatory compliance and tax challenge.

I would like the next government to make it easier for people with aspirations to achieve their aims, and for more of the freedoms and lifestyles of the better off to be available for the many. Instead of government seeking to regulate our conduct more and tax success wherever it finds it as if it were a problem, I want a government that rewards those who want to do more for themselves and their families, and who given the chance will do the right thing.