

My Conservative Home article

When the Red Wall seats tumbled to the Conservatives in 2019 they did so for two main reasons. Many voters were angry with Labour and the outgoing Parliament for seeking to overturn the results of the EU referendum. They voted to get Brexit done. They also voted for a Conservative government rather than a Corbyn led Labour one, expecting a Conservative government to be much better at managing the money and promoting their own prosperity.

They did not lend us their vote. They gave us their vote. They did not vote Conservative hoping for the Conservatives to be Labour light. They knew the Conservatives might cut tax rates for the rich as part of a general tax cutting agenda to make all taxpayers better off. They were reassured by a Manifesto that clearly ruled out most tax rises, unlike Labour. They expected the Conservatives to promote growth and to restrain migration. They expected some opposition to wokery. They knew the Conservatives would look to the private sector to do more of the heavy lifting of investing and promoting jobs.

Some Conservative MPs and Ministers seemed to think they needed to be more like Labour to keep these wandering voters. A Conservative government with a majority of over 70 has as a result introduced windfall taxes that do not even limit themselves to just taxing windfalls. These will now cut supply and damage investment. It has hiked business taxes. It has renationalised large parts of the railway. It has spread state education and child minding down to babies and the under 5s. It locked the whole country down for long periods, instructing people not to meet friends and family or to go to their regular places of work. In each case Labour has supported these moves but of course complained that they did not go far enough or were introduced later than desired. It has reinforced the misleading Labour idea that prosperity comes from Whitehall grants, encouraging MPs to bid for state funds to renovate or adorn their towns and cities, without releasing sufficient entrepreneurship to rev up the private sector economy.

Some of my correspondents write to me about the Lab/Con coalition they think we live under. They do not praise it, but complain it is not delivering what they thought they were voting for when they voted Conservative three years ago. Where is the clean Brexit, free of the EU and European court interference? Where is the control of our borders? Where is the low tax pathway to faster growth they ask? I write back and explain that there are some clear dividing lines between Conservative and Labour. Just look at the squeals of protest from the left as the government does try to implement the Prime Minister's most memorable promise, to stop the boats. There has been some fight back over extreme wokery, with a successful challenge to the SNP's approach to legislation on gender issues. The government was persuaded to reverse its foolish

increase in National Insurance, and says going forward it wishes to cut taxes for the many.

There is still the danger that the government will not do enough to show why voting Conservative gets you a better deal and is sufficiently different from the massed parties of the left. They fight each other to be more pessimistic about the outlook, to be greener than each other in ways which intrude on daily lives. They invent new ways to tax success and enterprise. They favour importing anything that creates carbon as if it saves the planet if foreigners generate the gas and take the jobs and profits. They vie with each other to come up with more ways of regulating business and family life, and to expand the state budgets and workforce well beyond the affordable.

This week we see a Conservative government confident it can win votes on a high tax budget strategy as the Opposition parties like it much more than many Conservatives. We see a government that was granted a blank cheque to do a worse deal than it eventually did with the EU, as there is no sell out too craven for the Opposition to accept. It can rely on Opposition votes to get through the contentious Protocol legislation. Conservatives and Unionist allies are full of worry about the continuing powers and ability of the EU to control Northern Ireland and cause tensions within our Union, but the coalition in Parliament has plenty of votes.

The Prime Minister's five aims make sense. Inflation will come down as it needs to do, thanks to the extreme monetary policy flip flop from the Bank of England. The NHS waiting lists can come down assuming the government has now sorted out pay levels and can see more medical staff recruited to get the job done. Growth will resume next year, though it needs to be sooner and faster. Borrowing levels will reduce when growth is fast enough. Stopping the boats is crucial. The public will want success, not just good intentions.

Speeding economic recovery is central to winning again. It takes a substantial tide of economic growth to lift enough voters' boats. That in turn needs tax cuts to boost living standards and demand, and needs a dedicated programme of licences, better regulations and government contracts to start increasing our capacities to supply everything from home grown food to bullets, from home produced oil and gas to UK made cars, from more broadband to a much larger electricity grid. There is not much time to do all this before the next election. The crucial thing for the government to remember is many people voted Conservative knowingly and for two clear purposes. The government must do everything possible to take full control of our country and its borders, and must do far more economically to promote growth and investment.