

The future of Conservatism – extracts from a speech to the Bruges Group at party conference

The stage is set for a post Covid recovery. Adopting a Conservative approach to liberty and prosperity is the best way to promote the greater happiness of the greater number.

Anti pandemic policies damaged incomes and jobs and removed many freedoms. The first task is to restore all our lost freedoms so the quarter of our economy that was effectively closed down can flourish again. The successful vaccination programme should give us the scope to relax, leaving it to each individual to judge how much exposure they want to others given the risks.

The second task is to make the case anew for work as the best means to banish poverty and improve life styles and chances for families. Conservatives have done more than the socialist inclining parties to advance prosperity, because we recognise it comes primarily from enterprise and effort by millions of people and hundreds of thousands of businesses. Markets generate choice and opportunity. Profits reward those who venture their capital and put in their effort, and help pay for the new investment employees and consumers need . Prices fluctuate to bring forward more supply where needed or to reduce output where the popularity of the product or service is waning. Governments must allow price systems to send their signals.

Markets are not cold impersonal enemies of the many . They are the way we all have choices of what to buy and where to work. All humanity participates in the market. Of course Conservatives believe that the state needs to step in to help those in need, to support the ill and disabled, to prevent monopoly exploitation or market abuse. Conservatives believe in the rule of law to keep people using markets honest. We also know that public sector monopolies that charge customers also need taming to avoid poor service, high cost and no choice that we used to get from nationalised industries.

The immediate need to is to get some tax rates down. Lets forget the National Insurance rise, the tax on jobs. Lets relax the IR35 rules so they do not stop people developing self employed businesses. Lets take VAT off domestic heating and insulation products. Lets offer a tax boost to those who will substitute home grown food, home produced gas and home produced timber amongst other things for the large import bills we currently pay and all the extra energy cost of long haul transport.

Let's help more people on their personal journeys with great education, better training , and easier access to buying a home and setting up your own business.