

Austerity

It's only words but words matter.

People really should stop being anti-austerity. Austerity is by definition a good thing. It means financial prudence. It means not squandering resources. By being anti-austerity you allow us to be characterised as the party of irresponsible spending, not to be trusted with the economy.

What the Tories have been doing is economically and socially disastrous; and it is certainly not austerity.

Curtailing e. g. NHS and local authority budgets so as to force public bodies into debt is not austerity but just the decentralisation of national debt.

Postponing expenditure on the maintenance of public buildings is not austerity if the cost next year will be four times as great.

Selling public assets (houses, shares) for less than they are worth is certainly not austerity: it increases the nett national debt.

Failing to invest in new houses, publicly or privately, pushes up rents and increases housing benefits: that is not austerity. Nor is leaving the building industry to wither because of lack of investment, thus wasting available resources and increasing unemployment.

Giving substantial tax cuts to the better off is certainly not austerity. Nor would be any increase in the IHT threshold.

Increasing the pay of MPs at a time of hardship is not austerity, particularly when pay elsewhere (if any) is severely constrained. Nor is having the nation pay for dozens of "special advisers", nearly all of whom work on behalf of the Tory party rather than the government. (An exception is, of course, the "Personal assistant to the Wife of the Prime Minister", which was clearly not a political appointment.) Sacking them when the Prime Minister they so faithfully served resigns confirms their non-governmental roles, and then handing out gratuitous additional payments is most certainly not austerity.

Reducing the staffing of HMRC at a time when government revenue is under pressure, and when tax avoidance at all levels is blatantly rampant, is at best a questionable form of austerity. I am sure that a good tax inspector could garner more missing tax revenue than 100 times the cost of employing her.

Indeed it remains to be explained just what is the nett fiscal benefit of sacking any productive government employee, given the need to offset the saving of the cost of employment by the cost of the loss of service, the severance cost, the directly resulting loss of tax revenue, the increase of benefit payments, and the rippling effect of the loss of trade for shops and other suppliers to that person.

I am sure you can add significantly to this list. But the overall message is that we really must argue in favour of austerity and thus continue to condemn the Tory government's carefree and vicious anti-austerity actions in the name of austerity which ruin the nation's economy and harm its people.

Please.

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