

GP appointments and waiting times

On Friday I joined a regular local health review meeting to hear from management where the NHS has reached in restoring services post covid and tackling waiting lists. I was told that activity levels are up on pre 2020 figures and all waits of over 2 years have been eliminated. A and E , GP appointments and 111 calls are all well up on past levels as the NHS seeks to tackle the backlogs.

If you vote Conservative you want Conservative policies

It was a strange idea that in the Red Wall seats Labour voters had lent their votes to the Conservatives in 2019. It was an even stranger idea that that meant those voters wanted a Conservative government to behave more like a Labour one.

A vote is a vote. People mean it at the time. They will change at a later election if the party or person they voted for lets them down. In 2019 Conservative voters voted for Conservative ideas and abilities. They wanted levelling up tory style, where government gives people more chances to earn a good living, keep more of their own money, buy a home, get training and education to help them get on in the world. They look for a hand up not a hand out. They did not vote Conservative to have a bigger bureaucracy, more government or higher taxes.

Today in the aftermath of a couple of bad by election results the soul searching by Conservative Ministers should be easy. They should ask why haven't they yet delivered the lower taxes, the greater freedoms, the better opportunities to start a business, grow a company, own a home and all the other features of a successful growth and prosperity strategy. Why are taxes going up and why is the economy slowing down?

The way to recover is not to double down with Treasury austerity, new taxes and higher taxes. The way to recover is to live the dream, restore the brand – being a Conservative is all about backing people to succeed, getting out of the way of those who can do well and offering appropriate help to those who want to follow them.

My Question about strengthening UK Courts that should not be answerable to Foreign courts

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): This Parliament is the main guarantor of our rights and liberties; it created them in battles over many centuries for the benefit of us all. Would not this great role be strengthened if our Supreme Court were indeed supreme and not answerable to foreign courts that do not understand the mood of the British people and what they expect of their legislators?

Dominic Raab, Deputy Prime Minister, The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice: My right hon. Friend is absolutely correct. I know that when he gets a chance to peruse the proposals, he will find those principles and that spirit reflected in the Bill of Rights, and I look forward to discussing these matters with him further.

My Question on advancing UK prosperity post-Brexit

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for all that he is doing to advance UK prosperity and growth, including this Bill. The common fisheries policy sunk many of our fishing boats. Can we have a policy to replace that fleet? The EU policy ripped up many of our orchards with grants. Can we have some UK money and a policy to replant our trees? The EU imposed VAT on us and has left us with a burden on our energy. Now surely is the time to use our freedoms and cut VAT.

Jacob Rees Mogg, Minister for Brexit Opportunities and Government Efficiency: My right hon. Friend is right: it is one of our freedoms. In his spring statement, the Chancellor announced some amelioration of VAT. I will ensure that my right hon. Friend's suggestion is passed on to the Chancellor.

Treasury austerity

The Treasury tell us that imposing a windfall tax and raising taxes to tackle

a budget deficit is exactly what Mrs Thatcher did, so they should do the same again. What they do not go on tell you is Mrs Thatcher only followed that Treasury advice for the first two years. It is true she inherited inflation that was far too high and very weak state finances from a spendthrift Labour government. When she took the Treasury measures it helped put the UK into recession, took the Conservatives to 23% in the polls and needed a change of policy to sort the economy out.

She and the Chancellor shifted policy to relax the squeeze and then embarked on a series of cuts to Income tax, taking it down from 30% to 25%. Various smaller taxes were abolished. The economy started to grow again, which was much needed both to bring the deficit down as revenues picked up, and to cut unemployment which had been far too high in the 1970s.

The latest figures show that Treasury austerity has badly slowed the economy this year compared to the world leading growth of last. Just as last year faster growth meant the borrowing kept on undershooting Treasury/OBR forecasts by a large margin, so now we see borrowing in excess of their forecasts. Let me try and explain again. The amount of borrowing, the gap between spending and tax revenue, is very sensitive to the growth rate. If you grow faster you get more tax revenue in and have less money going out on benefits to the unemployed and low paid. If you sandbag growth there will be less tax revenue coming in and more people need financial support.

So Treasury, give us a growth strategy, not more austerity.