

Labour's policy approach

Much has been written and spoken about Labour this week as they met for Conference. I will today give one of my rare critiques of the leading Opposition party's policy approach.

It is difficult to square their analysis which wrongly claims public services have been starved of money in recent years, with their proposal that there should be an iron discipline against more spending, taxing and borrowing save for a very few limited changes paid for by VAT on school fees, and an extra tax on Non Doms. They ignore the £350 bn increase in annual cash spending this Parliament so far, an increase well above inflation. They ignore the collapse of public sector productivity.

Were they to win office they would soon be subject to many spending pressures from the public sector Unions and some of their own MPs to tear up the iron rules and go for a higher taxing, higher spending, higher borrowing model. They have no ideas for getting productivity back to even 2019 levels. Their attack on waste centres on getting back more of the wrong claims on covid relief monies, where the present government's policy is to maximise the repayments. Labour would be using the same officials to pursue the same policy. Savings on private planes will be tiny in a £1.1 trillion budget and many Ministers will doubtless still be flying around the world in expensive seats on commercial flights.

Their views on migration favour making faster decisions on applications,. The danger is they will allow or encourage flagging many more people through. The safest and quickest thing to do for the official is to say Yes. This avoids criticism from the applicant and legal challenge and means they could rush the weighing of the evidence or skip the need for proper documentation seeing the Ministerial imperative to get a fast time for processing. Putting on more safe routes of entry and speeding consideration could be similar to offering an amnesty to all who are here in the queue, and is closer to having open borders. The wish to do a deal with the EU to try to get more co-operation from France would come at the cost of accepting more migrants from the EU. The EU are keen to spread the large numbers coming across their southern and eastern frontiers through as many states as possible.

The policy of wanting to force through more planning permissions to build homes and new towns whatever the local view of the desirability and feasibility of this policy is at least consistent with a migration policy likely to boost numbers of newcomers. The housing shortage is partly the result of up to 600,000 additional people coming to the UK and needing homes in a single year, when the homes build rate has never been anywhere big enough to cope with such arrival numbers on top of domestic demand. The planning policy is not a good idea. Communities have been asked to take a lot of new homes in many parts of the country, and have seen homes built before the extra roads, hospitals, schools, utility provision has been completed. It is also very difficult to hit CO₂ targets for reduction if the country invites in many more people and needs to build many more homes for them, as this is

bound to increase the CO₂ output substantially.