

My Interventions on the Finance Bill

(1)

My question was designed to point out that Scotland's higher taxes and extra laws have impeded economic progress there. Educational standards have slipped relative to England and the Scottish public sector struggles with poor productivity. He confirms Scotland has grown less quickly than England and is wrong to think the growth in England is just London and SE.

Can the hon. Gentleman tell us why Scotland grows less quickly than England, despite having more public spending per head?

Had the right hon. Gentleman done any real research, he would know that the figures for the UK are skewed dramatically by the overheated economy of London and the south-east, which buck the UK trend. If he looks at the figures for all the counties of England, including those in the north of England, he will see how the Government are letting down the people of England across the piece. But of course he does not want to do that. He just wants to make a lazy characterisation of what is happening, saying nothing about people's potential, which is being ignored and run down by this place, this Government and the official Opposition, who have no idea how to change that.

Clauses 1 to 4 aim to maintain the current rates of income tax, including the savings rates, for another financial year. However, they do little to mitigate the Government's broader fiscal missteps. In contrast, Scotland's progressive approach to income tax under the SNP— I almost choked when we heard about progressive taxation earlier—has not only shielded public services from Westminster's austerity but enhanced them, generating approximately £1.5 billion in additional revenue. We are protecting those on lower incomes, because most people in Scotland pay less income tax and dramatically less council tax than people in England.

All the scare stories about people leaving Scotland because of its progressive policies have proved to be rubbish. The report from His Majesty's Revenue and Customs has shown that more higher-rate taxpayers have moved to Scotland. The revenue that the Scottish Government are attracting supports a wide array of social benefits, from free prescriptions to university tuition, which significantly reduces the cost of living for Scottish residents. Those are all things that this Parliament would attack, and Kezia Dugdale has today posted a warning about what would happen if Labour got its hands on the Scottish Parliament.