

The Queen's speech debate

Today the government has a chance to set out its aims for the next couple of years freed of the special measures for covid which preoccupied people and Parliament from March 2020. I want them to set out not just a plan for 2022-4 but also a wider vision for an independent, innovative, flexible, democratic, freedom loving UK engaged with the wider world but governed by ourselves.

Prime Ministers need to recognise the factions and groups within the Conservative party and craft a programme which carries most of the MPs with them for most of the time. Fortunately there is today considerable agreement between One Nation, the European Research group, the Free enterprise groups and the social Conservatives about the main needs. We are all agreed we need a strong programme geared to economic growth, more jobs and better pay. We all want lower taxes, and wish to see opportunity to own, to get a good education and training and the chance of a good job to be spread as widely as possible.

The Bank of England has just laid bare the way current economic policy may worsen conditions for many with no growth ahead, higher unemployment and difficulty in affording the private and public investment needed to transform more lives. The Bank does at least think inflation will soon be on the wane after a bad summer this year. They may this time be right. That gives the government a bit more scope to do what needs doing.

I want the government to adopt a 2% growth target, and to take joint responsibility with the Bank for the 2% inflation target. The Bank has failed to keep inflation anywhere near that level this year. Government needs to do much more to clear the way for the UK to invest more in the private sector, to produce more goods at home and grow more food at home. It needs to redouble its recent efforts to produce more domestic oil and gas.

The methods to bring about this growth require lower tax rates, less prescriptive regulation whilst preserving high standards of employment, safety and animal welfare laws, sensible use of government ordering and more encouragement of self employment and entrepreneurship. The Treasury needs to be transformed from its negative approach. It should stop using IR 35 to prevent people working for themselves. It should cut Corporation tax to the 15% world minimum. It should cut the National Insurance tax on jobs. It should sponsor new rules to allow landowners and local communities to participate in profits from ventures needing planning permission.

There does not have to be a recession in the next two years to get on top of inflation. The best way to get the deficit down is to go for growth. Growth will come if more people think it worthwhile to work for themselves or to expand small businesses. The demand is there, as we import too much. It needs positive reform to allow more people to go on the journey to home ownership, to self employment and to participating in a growing business.