

My intervention during the debate on the Finance Bill, 01 July 2020

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): I agree with the right hon. Gentleman about the importance of jobs. Is he worried that the reform the Government have in mind might mean that a self-employed person working on their own in one of our constituencies could lose a contract to a foreign company, because the big company undertaking the contract might think that was safer?

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): I am not sure about the part of the right hon. Gentleman's intervention that referred to foreign companies, but the turbulence of the labour market right now does pose a danger to contractors. The Government have already recognised that to some degree in the delay announced for this measure.

Withdrawing support schemes at the same pace for all sectors does not recognise that some sectors are in far more difficulty than others, and that is particularly true for any sector based on the idea of people gathering closely together. Many sectors such as transport, aviation, sport, theatre, music, and others, are global British strengths, but right now they are on their knees.

Dropping the social distancing rule from two metres to one metre is not enough when, in some cases, any kind of social distancing is impossible. Let us take live music, for example, which is based on the very opposite of social distancing. The break-even point for many venues and events is often being 80% to 90% full, and the change to one metre will not make that much difference to them. We need an approach that takes into account the different impact on different sectors.

Measure it if you want to manage it

On Tuesday I raised the issue of management information with the Chancellor of the Duchy, the Minister in charge of the Cabinet Office. It's an unusual subject for Parliament, as it is sadly neglected. Political argument often proceeds based on a few statistics. The numbers become friends and enemies to the disputants, and may be imperfectly understood or even misleading.

Large departments of government like big companies need managing. The CEO or Permanent Secretary needs a few general figures to monitor the main trends and outcomes. The numbers need to be accurate, consistent and informative. In the Benefits department figures on delays and error rates for example matter and should trigger action from the top when they wander too far from decency. In the NHS success rates for treatments and waiting times are an obvious

couple of concerns. Value for money also should figure with a way of capturing unit costs.

This high level information is also important for the Cabinet Minister in overall charge. Government produces masses of numerical information. The Art is finding within it the relevant information for any person's level of responsibility.

[IR 35 and the Loancharge.](#)

I supported moves to get a rethink on these two difficult tax issues yesterday evening, but was on the losing side on both occasions.

[The Prime Minister's building plans](#)

The Prime Minister set out a vision of hope and optimism yesterday about economic recovery. He also detailed some £5bn of accelerated and useful public sector investment in better school and FE buildings, road improvements, health buildings and new schools. This is welcome.

We also need to recognise that even allowing for the temporary sharp fall in output the UK economy is still a £2 trillion economy. A recovery rests heavily on the positive response of the private sector. Better roads and communications help. Good quality education and plenty of educational opportunity for all is crucial.

The big numbers of state support rest in the furlough scheme and the 8 million people currently helped by it. Success in recovery will come from finding the right ways to get the companies that employ them off state support, and restoring as many of those jobs as possible. For those who do lose their jobs from their current employers, we need maximum job opportunities to speed new openings for those made redundant.

Here the challenge is to think through what the future offers for shops, cafes, restaurants and a range of services on our High Streets. Maximum flexibility is needed for landlords and tenants to adjust their use of buildings to new ventures or socially distanced versions of old activities. There needs to be many strands to generating more new jobs. These can come from the digital revolution, from the artificial intelligence reforms and from the onward march of the robots. They can come from growing more of our own food, catching and processing more of our own fish, growing more of our own timbers, generating more of our own power and all the other openings

identified.

Yesterday the Environment and Housing Secretary set out proposals to make it easier to flex the use of commercial buildings with all this in mind.

We do need education to equip young people for the opportunities of the digital world. We are entering an era of rapid change, where the transition to a digital and on line economy has just been out into fast forward by the arrival of home working for the many.

[My intervention during the Statement on the appointment of the National Security Adviser and other senior civil service positions, 30 June 2020](#)

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): I strongly support the split of the two roles. They are both very big and very different jobs.

When the Government comes to appoint a new Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service would it pay special attention to the need to improve the accuracy, timeliness, relevance of data being used by Chief Executives and other senior managers throughout the Civil Service and the agencies and timely data to Ministers, so they can ask the right questions and provide the right supervision. I think there could be a lot of improvement in that area.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP): My Right Honourable Friend is absolutely right, and he was intimately involved in a program of Whitehall reform when he was Head of the Prime Minister's Policy Unit in the 1980's as a very young man. The innovations that were brought in at that time under political appointees such as John Hoskyns and others helped to create the next steps agencies which were so vital in making sure there was greater accountability in the delivery of public services and we could do well to learn from some of the examples he set.