

Delivering an egalitarian transformation in the United Kingdom

"A country that works not just for a privileged few, but for everyone."

Theresa May, on her arrival, and departure, as Prime Minister

The deluge of support for the Brexit Party should shake the established parties to their foundations, coming immediately after last Friday's 'notice to resign' from Theresa May. It underlines not only people's resolve to get on with a decision they took three years ago, but also that the underlying issues polarising wealth and influence within the United Kingdom have not gone away.

It is not a protest vote. It is a call for returning power to the people. It is a rejection of elites of all kinds: whether those permanent bureaucrats of the EU Commission, socialist cliques who claim to speak for the people but in truth feather their own nests, and the rich and powerful of the centre right.

Farage gets it, Farage symbolises it, and whoever is the next Tory leader must be able to welcome him when he is ready, with open arms: otherwise the Conservatives will be toast in the next General Election.

The only economic model which can deliver this revolution of individual empowerment is egalitarian capitalism: so please read on for our summary outline of the key points which ought to be in the manifestos of those who aspire to be the next Prime Minister.

An egalitarian approach to policy formation starts with the premise that, as [Thomas Jefferson](#) said, "all are created equal, with unalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". This means that an egalitarian government should not seek to impose solutions on people, but to encourage individual freedom based on equality of opportunity.

Every policy initiative should be tested against these dual yardsticks of individual freedom and equality of opportunity, whether in economics, business, local government, transport, etc... These are not principles to which just lip service can be given: they must be embedded deep in the DNA of government, and be tested regularly to ensure that they are not becoming smothered by that arrogance which is the Achilles heel of the politician.

Here are some examples, by department, of policies which could be driven by these criteria:

- [HM Treasury](#)
- Form a new advisory group on capital markets, including:
 - a new drive for personal share ownership, in order to reconnect people with business;
 - re-balancing the scales between private equity, which is generally inaccessible to individual participation, and public markets, to include looking at the treatment of interest, stamp duty, the burden of regulation, and the bias towards trade sales;
- Introduce a major incentivised learning programme of life skills for young people whose families are in receipt of Child Tax Credit, in order to prepare them to achieve their hopes and aspirations in adulthood, and to earn a store of initial financial resources to set them on their way;
- Form a working group to review whether initiatives to boost home ownership are working, particularly for young people - and take action accordingly;
- Take clear 'ownership' of the £9 billion Child Trust Fund scheme in which almost all 8-16 year olds (over six million) already have individual accounts, helping The Share Foundation drive recovery of c. two million lost accounts worth £3 billion, affecting the most disadvantaged young people across society;
- Introduce a new voluntary system through which higher rate taxpayers would be able to reimburse the Exchequer for their use of universal services, via their tax return: with the proceeds going directly towards the incentivised learning programme outlined above;

- Re-consider roll-out of the Government's stake in Royal Bank of Scotland by offering free shares to all those on electoral rolls throughout the United Kingdom, as originally proposed by Portman Capital.
- Business
 - Introduce a new initiative by which businesses would encourage both employee and customer share ownership, with particular focus on tech giants. These companies would be expected to recognise the value of their stored customer data by provision of an equity stake in the business;
 - Establish a new working group in order to ensure measures for individual empowerment and skills training are working, including financial awareness training and the apprenticeship scheme.
- Education
 - Make provision for a 'Financial Awareness' GCSE, probably using the LIBF level 2 examination already in operation (and being taken by 30,000 young people this year);
 - Ensure that schools are making, and will continue to make, full use of the opportunities presented by the Child Trust Fund scheme over the next 10 years;
 - Require universities to place more emphasis on life skills in entrance criteria, in order to encourage schools to place more focus on these subjects, including Financial Awareness;
 - Allocate funds, either by enabling outcome payments returns on social investment or directly, in order to provide for mentoring and incentivisation programmes for special education needs, such as the '[Stepladder of Achievement](#)' programme and the '[12BY24](#)' university entrance initiative, both for looked-after young people, and both designed to reduce the number of those not in education, employment or training.
- Transport
 - Offer annual 'season ticket' bus passes at cost to all people of working age, on the same terms as the old people's bus pass (local buses throughout the United Kingdom, after 9am) in order to provide cheaper public transport: thereby using unfilled capacity and reducing environmental damage and congestion;
 - Offer free bus passes to all care leavers aged 16-25, in order to help them get to work or higher education: thereby reducing those not in education, employment or training;
 - Finance investment in the rail network from the fuel duty escalator, in order to reduce rail fares and reduce environmental damage;
 - Increase capacity on the rail network by introducing double-decker trains, and consider scrapping the HS2 project.
- Work & Pensions
 - Further refine Universal Credits, so that the scheme is seen more as an empowering feature for people on benefits rather than as a stick or sanction used to drive people into work, with little regard for their circumstances. As a general principle, an egalitarian government should be placing more emphasis on targeted support and empowerment for the disadvantaged than universal provision.

There are, of course, many other areas of public policy which warrant 'individual freedom /equality of opportunity' scrutiny, including the environment, migration and health and social care. Seen through the lens of these criteria, many changes could be made to current Government policy.

The word missing from all of the above is Brexit, and rightly so because we must ensure that we have left the European Union by 31 October, 'deal or no deal'. My own preference is to invite Leo Varadkar and Arlene Foster to reach bilateral agreement on what should happen to the 'Backstop' and, if Ms. Foster cannot find an outcome satisfactory to the DUP, we should leave with no deal - and sort out our trading relationships with the EU after our departure.

The key point, however, is that we've now spent - some would say, wasted - three years focusing on Brexit since the 2016 referendum, and it's now time to focus on the needs and aspirations of the British people.

Gavin Oldham OBE

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