

The BIG Question?

With a new Liberal-Conservative government in power in Westminster we ask representatives of the public and Private sector what they think should be the new administrations priorities

Brian Campfield

NIPSA General Secretary

There is a consensus among the mainstream parties that deep and unprecedented cuts to public services are necessary and any differences of opinion relate to the scale and timing of these cuts to services to the people. Unfortunately the focus of attention has moved from the real causes of the crisis (ie the bankers and financial wizards) to cutting public services.

As a trade union representing workers who deliver important public services to the community we would like the incoming government to focus not on butchering public services but on how it can generate sufficient income to not only protect services but also to expand them.

A utopian wish, one might think, but the reality is that there is an alternative to the cuts consensus. Much work has been done to identify sources of taxation which could be used to support public services. The public rarely

hears about the staggering amount of money lost to the public purse through a combination of tax avoidance, tax evasion and uncollected tax. The Tax Justice Network estimates that around £123bn is lost to the Treasury every year as a result of these factors. Those that benefit from this are the wealthy and large private corporations. That amount would go a very long way to avoiding any need to cut public services yet the current government continues to cut staff in Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs-making it less likely these monies will be collected.

There is also a need to introduce a more progressive taxation regime which will force the wealthy to pay a greater share of their wealth in tax. Even during the Thatcher era tax on earnings over £100,000 was at the rate of 60 per cent. Anyway who needs more than £100,000 as an annual income to ensure their family can live a decent life?

Building a fairer and more equal society must be a priority for any government but we know that is unlikely to be an



10W20N143

objective of an incoming government whatever its complexion.

So the only choice we have is to build the broadest possible support across the community against the forthcoming cuts in public services because these cuts will hurt everyone in our society and defending public services must be the number one priority. Public services make our society not only fairer but also more civilised. It is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that public services are defended.

Dr Conor Patterson

President of Newry Chamber of Commerce and Trade

What Newry needs is a Government in London which won't set about implementing swinging cuts in the public expenditure programmes which maintain health and education services and which support economic development in Northern Ireland.

The shock to the Northern Ireland economy could potentially be devastating. Everyone agrees that more private sector jobs should be created in Northern Ireland, but that is a long-term objective. In fact that has been an objective of Governments of all hues since the war. The reason that public sector in Northern Ireland is larger than that in similar sized regions in Britain is that Northern Ireland is separated from Britain by the Irish Sea and economies of scale are simply not achievable in the same way that they are in England, Wales or Scotland. Northern Ireland has also been separated economically for

most of the last 90 years from the rest of Ireland. Northern Ireland, a region created out of conflict, has thus been doubly disadvantaged. We have also had the legacy of a destructive internal conflict to address.

Northern Ireland and Newry's interests will be high up the political agenda but only if political leverage can be exerted by the Northern Ireland parties. But the political set-up which would facilitate that might be seen by the markets as weak and unstable. Sterling could weaken further and while in the short to medium term a weaker sterling would benefit Newry (our exporters would find it easier to sell their products overseas and

Southern shoppers would be able to buy more for their Euro), the cost of borrowing would rise and in the longer term that would disadvantage every taxpayer because ultimately it would be taxpayers who would have to pay more to service that debt.

A Coalition Government which is sensitive to Northern Ireland's needs, which does not precipitously cut public



10W20N143

expenditure in the region, which supports the development of new private sector jobs over the long term which supports the further development of all-Island trade opportunities; a Government in which "the markets", to which the UK owes so much money, will have confidence - that is v will be in Newry's best interest.

Had an accident?
Help is just minutes away!



CRASH
Repair Solutions
Belfast Road, Newry

- » Insurance Approved
- » Repairs
- » Estimates
- » Replacement Vehicles
- » Recovery

Call in today to find out more.
Or call freephone 0500 27 27 27

Katrion

20% off

mid season

Thursday 20 to Monday 24 May

exclusions apply

4 & 14 Scarva Street, Banbridge, Tel. 028 406 29768

