

Note to Policy Exchange: when you promote full employm...

Published: January 13, 2026, 10:08 pm

According [to the Telegraph](#):

Tough schemes in which the long-term unemployed are forced to do community work in return for benefits are backed by an overwhelming majority of voters according to a new poll.

The poll was for Policy Exchange - supposedly David Cameron's favourite think tank.

What they and The Telegraph sought to say as a result of their survey on fairness was:

The YouGov survey uncovered a widespread public belief that benefits are too generous, with voters blaming the easy availability of welfare payments for joblessness.

The public also backs a stronger sanctions scheme - particularly for claimants who are drug users or have criminal records - and a "cap" on child benefits, with people who have three children not getting payments if they have a fourth.

The "fairness" poll, commissioned by the Policy Exchange think tank, finds that most voters believe that the state should actively discourage people from becoming lone parents, although they do not back tax breaks for married couples.

In addition:

The poll, however, shows that a startling 80 per cent of all voters thinks that people who have been out of work for 12 months should have to do community work before they get benefits - as long as they are physically and mentally capable of working. Furthermore, half of all voters (50 per cent) think that someone on JSA should have to spend between three and eight hours a day searching for work in order to get welfare payments.

But the stupidity of these responses is made clear when a question was asked on the reason for long term unemployment. As was noted:

- the most popular answer (33 per cent) was "benefits are too generous or easy to claim," comfortably beating
- "there are not enough jobs available" (20 per cent.);
- 12 per cent believe the long-term jobless are "lazy or lacking in willpower" while
- 14 per cent say "the rewards from working are too small".

(I added the bulletting).

This is much more telling. First, note the benefit in question (Job Seekers Allowance) is £67 a week. Perhaps the respondents would like to try living on it?

Second, extraordinarily just 20% had noticed that with 2.5 million people unemployed there weren't enough jobs to go round. For the unemployed, let alone the 500,000 or more now on disability benefit the government wants to force into work.

And why is that mistake so easy to understand? Well, because these people reveal by their own answers how little they really know about their own position or that of others in the economy. Whwen sakes about their own positions (again, bulletting added):

- 61 per cent believe they are in the middle 30 per cent of earners.
- Only two per cent think they are in the top 30 per cent
- 9 per cent think they are in the bottom 20 per cent.

I have no idea what happened to the other 28%.

But the point is clear: if you ask people who have no clue about an issue what they think, and then suggest that this should be the basis for policy you will actually simply base policy on prejudice.

That no doubt is what Policy Exchnage want to do.

Indeed, the [nasty commentary piece by Janet Daley](#) shows just that -0 and is no doubt exactly what Policy Exchange (and I suspect cameron) desired: as she said:

After all these years of being morally blackmailed by the poverty lobby, harried by socialist ideologues and shouted at by self-serving public sector axe-grinders, the people are not cowed. Even after being bludgeoned by the BBC thought monitors and browbeaten by Left-liberal media academics with the soft Marxist view of a "fair" society — from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs — they have not bought it. They do not believe that if people are poor, it is necessarily society's fault, and therefore society's duty to deal with the consequences.

This is, of course, the libertarianism that is destroying the USA being imported to the UK. The logic is simple: it's "let them sink". That is what the Tories want to do: that is what their friends in the media want. And it plays to a nastiness that is, I am afraid, compounded by fear.

And yes, there is real fear in our society: fear of unemployment, fear of not getting housing, fear of not getting access to education, fear of old age and the poverty it might bring. Fear that therefore says hoard all you have for yourself for fear someone else might get it. Fear that this government deliberately generates. Fear that the Policy Exchange seek to promote. Fear they want to exploit.

But it's odd that when they turned from asking deliberately leading negative questions and asked what would make the UK fairer a different picture emerged from this survey:

Given a choice of various options on how to make Britain a fairer place, the most popular choices were reducing unemployment, cutting tax for low earners and reducing the cost of living. The least popular were reducing university tuition fees, banning private education and increasing welfare benefits.

So although people attacked these who were unemployed they knew that a lack of jobs was a real issue. And they only see tax as an issue for the low paid - as it is, because they have the highest overall tax rates - compounded by Tory VAT rises. And the cost of living has, of course, been put up by the Tories.

But nothing disguises the misinformation in this story - a misinformation that Policy Exchange are, I am sure well aware of. And that's the simple fact that with 2.5 million unemployed, and with hundreds of thousands more to be sacked as a result of Tory policy this year, for may there is no chance at all of getting a job. It's government policy that they should not have one.

But these people - unemployed through no fault of their own - are being made the victims of policy - and then being vilified. This is right wing politics at its worst - always choosing elements in society too weak to defend themselves due to misfortune as the supposed cause of wrongly identified failure - and then seeking to firstly vilify and then punish them for it.

Expect policy initiatives soon saying there will be absolute limits on the amount of unemployment benefit anyone can claim, either in a period or over their life.

And then expect policy that will ban anyone who has taken drugs (which would include most of the Cabinet, I suspect) from claiming benefits if they had ever been caught (and 'nice' people aren't, of course).

And follow that on with compulsory unpaid work for benefits (call it the workhouse if you like).

And then for good measure, because these people won't then be able to look after their children as benefits to let them do so will have been denied to them, plan a programme of mass children's homes, with children forcibly removed from their parents to prevent their influence.

And then follow on with big scale prison building to handle the crime epidemics that will follow.

All creating private sector contracts for the supply of the necessary services to contain those affected, of course, so that the cabinet's friends can prosper from this policy.

And then you get some idea where all this is going.

Who said the Tories weren't the nasty party?

All the evidence is they're very nasty, indeed.

As is Policy Exchange, who are doing the dirty work.

This is the narrative we've got to beat.