

Reducing nothing to nothing is nothing

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As the [FT reports this](#) morning:

George Osborne has reassured companies that they will not be forced to raise wages to offset £12bn of benefit cuts to the working poor, as he puts the finishing touches to this week's Budget.

To put it another way, George Osborne is going to cut benefits for those on the lowest pay but who are in work and do nothing at all to increase the minimum wage, the net effect of which is a guaranteed increase in poverty.

He argues that cutting tax is his alternative. This, however, makes no sense at all: he must know that 6 million people in receipt of in work benefits do not pay tax so there is no compensation for them from any such cuts he may offer. After all, reducing nothing to nothing is nothing. And that, it seems, is what the government will expect people to live on.