

## Cameron, the Joy of Tax, and optimism

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I referred to David Cameron's joke about The Joy of Tax at the Conservative Party Conference yesterday [here](#).

The Guardian invited me to reply. That response is [available on their web site](#), and I haven't got much to add to it barring the thought that several commentators on the blog have put forward, quoting Ghandi:

*First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.*

I think I can safely say the arguments are well beyond stage one and are now somewhere in stages two and three. That does not mean stage four is inevitable. But it helps. As does continuing with the approach to policy creation that I have long been engaged with which I describe in the Guardian:

*We are optimists. We think things could be better. We think that by serious thought, careful policy design and targeted intervention we can improve society, especially for those who have been sidelined since 2010.*

*In contrast, it's clear Cameron does not want to engage in these processes. That's because he is what I described in a previous book ([The Courageous State](#)) as a cowardly politician: one who, when he sees a problem, declares his impotence to deal with it and hopes the market will resolve it for him, knowing there is no chance of it doing so.*

Cameron might have thought he made a joke. But what he revealed is the real choice now developing in UK politics: between those who believe in the power of the state to intervene for the good of the people of this country and those who, already well off, want to be voyeurs on the sidelines as wealth floods steadily upwards within the shrinking state they wish for.

The joke is not then at my expense, but most particularly at the expense of all those for whom life could be better but for his government reneging on the possibility of real change.

We have to win that real change. The [alternative is too grim to contemplate for too many people in this country.](#)