

e have a massive and multi-dimensioned unemployment cr

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As I noted yesterday, [the government's furlough scheme has been extended from 31 May to 30 June](#). The logic for doing so was very simple. If it had not been millions of people [would have started receiving redundancy notices yesterday](#). Official unemployment in this country would have skyrocketed, as it is in the USA. But this now raises profoundly difficult questions that will not be avoidable for long.

The first is that what this single act proves is that many of those furloughed are actually unemployed. Many are unlikely to have jobs to go back to. The government knows that. That is why they had to avoid them being declared redundant. So how do we now define unemployment?

Second, when is this going to be acknowledged?

Third, when in that case is the paradoxical requirement that those furloughed do absolutely nothing going to be removed when it is an absolute requirement that those unemployed work flat out to get work?

Fourth, when is the massive inequality of treatment between those furloughed and those unemployed going to be addressed? For how long can we tolerate the gross injustice of a two-tier unemployment system that pays some under £100 a week and others up to six times that sum?

Fifth, will that be when furloughing employers go bust anyway, come what may, and their staff then move to universal credit, which will create mass poverty on a scale most have been able to ignore to date amongst those on this benefit?

Sixth, is anyone thinking about this in government, at all?

Seventh, where is Labour on this issue?

Eighth, and the SNP, come to that?

The idea that we are somewhat all going back to work soon is, in reality, fading fast:

Grant Shapps has now said no one should plan on a summer holiday this year. This is the clearest sign that the government knows that the real reopening of our economy is not going to be happening anytime soon. And yet a game with massive social, economic and political injustice implicit in it is being played out in front our your eyes when what is required is real and radical reform to recognise that the issues coronavirus is creating are not going away any time soon.

Someone has to take a lead here. I will keep talking tax, but this is a crisis waiting to happen.