

Therese Coffey: a minister in cloud cuckoo land

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The FT has a report on an interview with Therese Coffey this morning, in which [it is noted that](#):

The UK's welfare system is prepared for a million-strong surge in the number of people claiming jobless benefits this winter, as the tapering of government wage support forces employers to take tough choices, according to the minister responsible for its smooth running.

I sincerely hope it is. It's wildly optimistic to think that there will only be one million additional unemployed people.

Therese Coffey, the work and pensions secretary, told the Financial Times that catastrophic job losses were not inevitable when the furlough scheme ended this month. Its successor – which will be far less generous to employers – was “well-targeted on starting to get companies to make choices”, she said, adding it was not yet clear whether they would opt for “fundamental restructuring” or keeping staff levels more stable, as they had after the last recession following the 2008 financial crisis.

But if she really thinks this crisis is like 2008 then she is living in cloud cuckoo land. 2008 was a financial crisis. This is so much more than that. Indeed, as yet the financial crisis has hardly begun this time. This time the crisis is about the real economy. If she can't spot the difference we really are in trouble.

But while insisting that the UK would not see a return to a Thatcherite era of mass unemployment, Ms Coffey acknowledged that many lower-paid workers were in the line of fire, as employers appeared to be holding on to higher-skilled staff who were harder to replace.

How wrong can you be? Johnson and Cummings are intent on making Thatcher look like an amateur.

“We've got this winter ahead of us. I want to make sure people keep a roof over their heads,” she said in an interview on Friday.

Well at least that bits easy. Speed up UC payments. Make sure UC covers mortgage payments. And make it sufficient to support a family. It's really not hard Therese.

But I bet she won't do it. And that's because supporting bankers and landlords is more important than keeping people in their homes.