

Sunak is not a low tax chancellor

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According to [Politico](#):

Rishi Sunak will lay his claim to be a “low tax” chancellor in a speech today as he delivers the annual Mais lecture at the Bayes Business School at 12.30 p.m.

Apparently, Sunak will say:

I firmly believe in lower taxes. The most powerful case for the dynamic market economy is that it brings economic freedom and prosperity. And the best expression of that freedom is for all of us to be able to make decisions about how to save, invest or use the money we earn. The marginal pound our country produces is far better spent by individuals and businesses than government.

This comes days after an essential healthcare test for Covid has been ended, and effectively becomes a tax as a result, with the burden falling most heavily on those with low incomes. And it comes on the day that [the Guardian notes that](#):

Students in England will have to pay back university loans over 40 years instead of 30 under swingeing reforms designed to save the Treasury tens of billions of pounds.

The number of students expected to pay back their loan in full is expected to double from under a quarter (23%) to more than half (52%) as a result of the changes, which will see many graduates paying for their degree until retirement in what was described as a “lifelong graduate tax”.

So, let's draw the obvious conclusions from what Sunak is saying.

First, using the typical game of deception that is now the Tory rule book, what he is suggesting is that he wants to cut those things described as taxes.

Second, I think we need have no doubt that what this really means is cuts for top rates - that's what I read into the coded message about the 'marginal pound'.

Third, knowing that he cannot afford to do this he will outsource taxation as a result. So, student loans charges, which are a tax, go up. Covid tests are charged for. Next we will have charges for GP appointments or attending A&E. Exemptions from such charges will be reduced. After that? Well, there is road pricing. And then carbon usage charges, maybe added to council tax. It's use as a policy instrument now has a precedent, after all. And in it will go.

There will be claims in every case that these charges are necessary for other policy reasons. But all will create elements of what will become a wide-ranging flat tax base that will be deeply regressive. They will hit the poorest hardest, and that will be their aim.

Sunak is not a low tax chancellor. He is a high tax chancellor who will do all he can to pretend he is not, including punishing those least able to pay.