

Funding the Future

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I watched most of Keir Starmer's speech yesterday morning. Several things stood out from it.

The first was that the vast majority was word salad. It was almost entirely meaningless. How or why anybody wrote it thinking that it would be relevant was hard to understand.

Second, Starmer treated his audience and the world beyond the room which he spoke with contempt when he suggested that everybody knows what a working person is when absolutely no Labour minister has been willing to define what they mean by this term when they have been asked to do so by the media. Apparently, the whole of his strategy is intended to serve the interests of these unidentifiable people and no one else, but because of the lack of definition, that is utterly meaningless. For more details, see this morning's video.

Third, whilst Starmer claimed that he was delighted that his chancellor will be the first woman in history to deliver a budget, he also seemed quite determined to announce as many of the measures that might be included within such a statement as possible. I came to the deeply unfortunate conclusion either he has no confidence in Rachel Reeves, or he has no confidence in the ability of a woman to deliver a Chancellor's speech because never, as far as I can recall, has a speech of this sort ever been made in anticipation of a budget by a Prime Minister before now.

Fourth, this speech also provided all the evidence that we might need of the almost total irrelevance of the proposals that his government is going to make. For example, £500 million of expenditure on social housing might, at cost, deliver only 2000 new homes of a size that a family could live in, and even then they might be small. That is really not enough to make a policy announcement about without the person making the delivery depending upon the fact that most people can't do maths as basic as this to work out how puny that announcement really was.

Similarly, the announcement of £1.4 billion to be spent on schools might imply expenditure of no more than £50,000 per school if, as I presume is the case, this sum is to be spent making good the backlog of repairs. Two decades ago, I was the chair of governors of the school that supposedly had a backlog of repairs that were estimated to

cost in excess of £900,000. The sum that he is proposing is not going to make any real difference to the state of the country's schools as a consequence.

On top of that, by refusing to continue the £2 maximum bus fair, and by increasing it to £3 to save the square root of diddly squat in terms of overall government expenditure, he created yet another group of mainly vulnerable people in society to whom his government has now turned its attention and left them worse off.

I can only presume Starmer wanted some of the budget glory for himself now he is prime minister. As a consequence, he sought to steal the credit for some of the budget measures for himself. Doing so he showed what a fool he is. If he had left these issues as being Rachel Reeves's responsibility, he could have subsequently blamed her for the failures that they represent, and he could then have sacked her or moved her sideways. But, as it is now, he has to take ownership of them. I suspect he will come to regret that. This Budget will be his failure, too, now.