

Is it now game over for the Tories?

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This is another morning when I have to struggle with the question of whether comments made at the Conservative Party conference are worth noting here, and where I succumb to the temptation to do so precisely because comments [made by Kemi Badenoch yesterday](#) were so absurd that they cannot go unnoticed.

In a speech which cannot have convinced anyone that the Conservative Party has any further relevance within UK politics, Badenoch made two economic policy announcements that stand out.

The first is that she will abolish stamp duty. The aim, she says, is to help young people buy homes. What she has very clearly never done is look at the data on what the impact of changes to stamp duty have on house prices. Almost invariably, cutting stamp duty results in an increase in house prices. People do not put the money saved in their pockets; they simply use it to offer a higher price for the property that they want to buy. In other words, this change will not help young people get on the housing ladder. It will instead mildly inflate our currently nearly stagnant UK property market, which is what the Tories have always sought to do on behalf of their ageing, property-value-fixated, middle-class voters.

Then [Badenoch built upon](#) the previously inane comments from her shadow chancellor, Mel Stride, promising that the Tories will cut government spending by cutting benefits, implementing racist policy, and reducing the size of the civil service, when they know that they never found ways to do this when in office, and by other equally absurd or repugnant measures. But the sting to all of this was in the tail. What she said was that at least half of all savings would be used to cut the size of government debt, as if this was somehow an objective of merit in its own right.

What she actually means is that she is going to suck more money out of the economy in the future, destroying income within it, inevitably reducing GDP and the well-being of people in this country, whilst in the process displaying her complete ignorance of macroeconomics, multiplier effects, how money and debt work, and a great deal else besides.

The list of charges to lay against the Tories is now very long, starting with 14 years of failure in government and a complete inability to learn from their own lessons of failure, to now proposing this sort of absurd policy for the economy, which can only result in reduced well-being for the vast majority of people in this country.

I admit I never thought the day would come when the Tories would cease to be politically relevant in the UK, but that prospect is now near.

I am aware that some are deeply troubled by this. I noticed Zoe Williams [in The Guardian](#) recently complaining that those celebrating this possibility from the left should be profoundly concerned because we need a centre-right party to oppose the far right. In the process, all she revealed was how weak her own political analysis is.

The fact is that we no longer need the Tories as a centre-right party, as Labour has effectively replaced them in that role. They are the political alternative to the far right now because they operate on the centre-right.

What we need, and what she failed to notice, is a genuine left-of-centre party (and not a centre-left party, which in the UK is inevitably a neoliberal party) that can deliver real change for the people of this country, of which change she is no doubt frightened.

I am not frightened of change. I wish it would happen. But if the demise of the Tories makes clear that what we lack in the UK is an effective left-of-centre party, and one does really emerge as a consequence, then I am happy for that to happen.

What I am sure of is that the Tories are over. They really are too incompetent to survive — as even [former Tory grandees like Michael Heseltine](#) would now agree.