

Tinkering at the edges, whilst adding to inequality. Th...

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The FT notes [this morning that](#):

Chancellor John Healey will help first-time homebuyers, tackle high energy costs and announce a series of “everyday fixes” in Wednesday’s Budget, amid warnings that family incomes could fall by between £440 and £770 over this parliament.

They added:

Healey is expected to focus limited Budget giveaways on easing the cost of living and helping small businesses. Allies say his overriding objective is to maintain fiscal discipline and to foster a fledgling economic recovery.

And as they also noted, leaving defence aside, the big Budget idea is to shift power and money from Westminster to the regions and nations of the UK. This is, apparently, key to Burnham's “theory of growth”.

This suggestion will apparently include the grant of new tax powers for mayors, with some business-rate retention for all mayors from next April and retained income tax from a year later.

What will happen as a result? Regional inequality will be embedded in the UK unless serious compensating financial measures are taken. Not all tax capacities are equal, of course. Unless that is allowed for, this measure is deeply dangerous.

And the interests of all those areas without mayors, of which there are a great many, will be profoundly prejudiced by this idea, which is, as this demonstrates, something very much less than a theory, and rather more a cobbled-together view lacking any serious intellectual foundations, let alone any inbuilt comprehension of social or economic justice.

The FT may be wrong, of course, but I suspect they are not. My sense that tomorrow's offering might represent a fiasco grows by the day.