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Quality of life [1]

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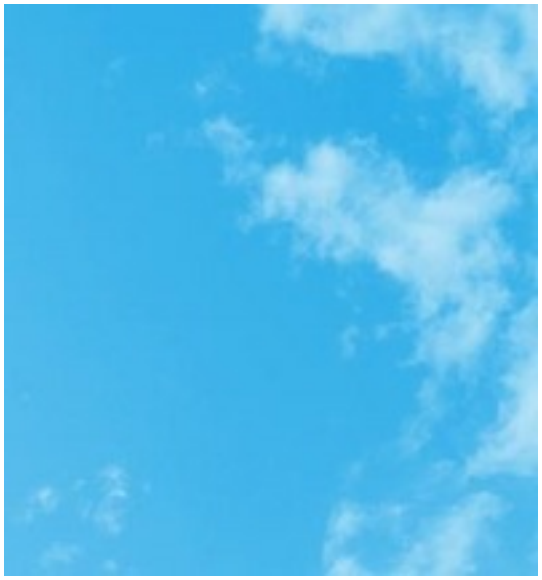

One idea which pops up a lot these days is that the government should be motivated by 'quality of life' in its policymaking, and not just economics. Some even say that gross national happiness should be the aim, rather than gross domestic product.

Well, it?s a nice idea, but why do people always think a higher quality of life requires more government? In their recent report for the Conservatives, Zac Goldsmith and John Gummer even suggested that our 'quality of life' would be improved by compulsory parking fees at supermarkets. Hardly.

The thing is, quality of life means very different things to different people. The one common theme, however, must surely be the freedom to pursue your own idea of happiness ? and that means less government, not more!

My quality of life would be much higher if only the taxman didn't steal so much of my income, for instance. If I was ill, I would be much happier knowing I could choose which hospital or doctor I went to. If I had children, I would be happier knowing I could choose their school.

As a Londoner, however, the biggest changes to my quality of life would probably come about if the trains were deregulated and the tube privatized, and I could get into work more easily. Of course, if only central London wasn't ringed by hideous tower blocks (built by the government), and if only our land-use planning system wasn't so restrictive, I might just be able to live closer to the office.

Policies aimed at making us freer and wealthier increase our choices, and give us a better opportunity to pursue our own idea of a good life. Whatever government does, that should be the aim.

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