

[Seeing the forest](#) [1]

Written by [Jan Boucek](#) [2] | Sunday 4 April 2010



The clan called Conservatives has taken a hesitant step out of the dense underbrush of the dark forest. For months, they approached selection for a new Forest Chieftain using rites dictated by the ruling clan called Labour, supported by a band of Westminster Chatterers. These ancient rites are a zero-sum game of keeping every tree, however diseased, for fear of destroying the entire forest. No tree can be cut or trimmed unless it is 'paid' for with equivalent tithes on the people, resulting in a forest that isn't growing but rather suffocating its demoralised inhabitants.

The rites of the ruling clan and its supporters are daunting. The Oracle Jeremy Paxman demands how 15 billion trees can be cut without diminishing the forest; the Sage Vince Cable claims he's been warning about this for years; the Upstart Philip Hammond rattles off 10 billion from conifers, 6 billion from oaks, 3 billion from leaf collecting and 2 billion from beyond the swamp; the Apologist Liam Byrne splutters that there is no alternative to the ruling clan's failed strategy.

Yes, they're all furiously counting the trees - some old and rotten, others tall and majestic and still others young but struggling to catch any sunlight. Howling wolves and swarms of midges scare the bejesus out of these hapless beancounters who clutch clipboards in the belief that this forest can only be endured, not tamed.

Now, along comes Sunny George Osborne from the Conservative clan with his startling notion that Labour's increase in workers' tithes (mysteriously called National Insurance) is a bad thing for clearing and taming the forest. For an instant, a hush falls over the sylvan thickness. But only for an instant; the ruling clan and its fellow-travellers soon fill the air with the sounds of scribbling pencils, clicking calculators and wails of 'infidel, heretic'!

Sunny George may not yet be a true believer but he's showing doubts about the old orthodoxy after wandering close to the edge of the forest where he caught a glimpse of its extent. He saw too many dead trees that need felling, too many overgrown trees that need coppicing and not enough space for young saplings.

With the call to repeal the workers' tithe increase, Sunny George recognized a healthy forest needs more lumberjacks, tree planters and carpenters. He was soon encouraged by support from beyond the forest that the tithe increase would surely reduce the numbers of these artisans. This support came from what the old guard derided as 'busy men' but these lived in seemingly happier places and were fearful of being

swallowed by the encroaching forest.

The last time Sunny George suggested cutting tithes, his clan became wildly popular. However, it soon resumed the old faith and the new believers drifted away. Sunny George's rediscovery of tithe-cutting might re-ignite faith in a better way of taming the forest.

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