Published on *Adam Smith Institute* (http://www.adamsmith.org)

The vision thing [1]

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This week?s obsession of our chattering classes has been an alleged failure of Prime Minister David Cameron?s government to implement a coherent strategy for an apparently flagging agenda. Clearly, bringing the nation?s appalling financial condition under some semblance of control is now so yesterday. Never mind that it was always going to be a long slog and that the journey has only just begun.

The latest bout of whingeing was mostly triggered by the March budget statement with its ?unfair? tax cuts, VAT on Cornish pasties, the so-called granny tax and trimmed charity tax credits. The Vision Thing critics say these clearly show up Mr Cameron and his Chancellor George Osborne as out-of-touch posh boys, lacking any ideas on how to take things forward.

What they really show, though, is how special interests have riddled the UK?s tax code with improvised explosive devices that detonate at the merest hint of tampering. From opera buffs to fast-food munchers, we?re all special interests now.

You?d think Mr Cameron?s previous incarnation as a public relations executive would have packaged those measures as a logical progression in dealing with the one issue that will make or break his government into the next election. For the fact is that the UK?s financial condition is the top priority ? government overspending is simply unsustainable ? and Mr Cameron has restated that view in response to the criticisms.

We at the ASI have been clear that the best way forward is to enhance the UK?s growth potential through various liberal policies of low taxes, more competition, less regulation and the like. Now those exploding measures in the budget are an opportunity to re-invigorate the mission to repair the government?s finances by presenting them as the start of a wider tax reform that does away with breaks for special interests in exchange for steady reductions in overall VAT and income tax rates.

It?s a good simple message and not hard to explain.

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