

One thing that Andrew Stephenson and I do agree on is that we are in a recession (Nelson Leader 16th May 2009).

However when the voters of Pendle go to the ballot box on the 4th June they will need to ask themselves what would a Tory administration have done.

Back in September 2008, Gordon Brown told David Cameron that “this was no time for a novice” and the Tory Leader showed some sense in backing the Labour Government’s measures to rescue the banking sector in a bipartisan manner. The Financial Times 1 October 2008 called this a “well judged intervention”. Since then, however, the Conservatives have sadly wandered back into the wilderness of economic naivety.

The Conservative response to the recession has been non-existent since the time they backed the Labour Government’s recovery plan and has consisted in carping from the sidelines but with no real alternative policy measures. This Labour government has over the last 18 months taken some decisive action to prevent a melt down in the financial system. A melt down brought about by the (Sir) Fred Goodwin’s and his ilk who have pressured their companies staff to go for growth in the value of shares and future expectation of growth - a quick buck now rather than build a stable business and balance sheet.

The Conservatives have had no response to this. There is no evidence that they would have stepped in to save the banking system and the wages and savings of the ordinary citizen if they had been in charge. A few Tory backbenchers have said that they would have protected savers deposits but let the banks go bust – but that would have been almost every bank in the country.

Looking back over the last ten years the Labour Government and County Council have demonstrated their commitment to improving the quality of life and access to public services. Under the Tories there would have been no minimum wage, no pension credit or family tax credit. Support for parents and young children through the Sure Start programme would not have happened. In the health sector, whilst there have been organisational issues that have concerned us all, there has been a dramatic change in numbers of nurses, investment in high tech. facilities that has had an unprecedented impact on access to facilities and the reduction of waiting times for treatment. Ambulances are once more taking emergencies to the Urgent Care Centre at Burnley General Hospital and Pendle Labour will continue to fight to get a full reinstatement of Accident and Emergency at Burnley.

The Tories always go on about crime - but investment in more police officers and resources from the Labour County Council into the community safety partnership has lead to significant reduction in crime levels in Pendle. Bringing policing closer to the community through PACTS (Police and Community Together Schemes) and the investment in the new police office in Brierfield are positive examples.

The Conservative approach is to let the market sort out any mess with minimal intervention. That is wonderful for those fortunate high earners but for the majority of voters of Pendle access to public services and support has to be at the heart of government thinking and what you get from the Tories is no policies and gloom and despondency and no answers to support us through a difficult time brought about by the quick buck financiers who fund the Conservative Party.

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