

SURF Annual Conference 2014

Notes from the Tax Discussion with Robin McAlpine

- Tax credits = “mad” to subsidise employers is not a sensible way to start a tax system
- Tax issues start to resolve themselves when you look at it clearly through an investment perspective
- If you want something changed, you have to see it
- We don’t understand impact of low-wage culture
- Low wages = low prices – this represses wages
- CEC, schools shut on Friday afternoon to free up teacher’s time. But staff in other jobs with children have to finish up early too. So we need to invest back in schools
- Norway has 30% public employment and the lowest rate of child poverty
- “Efficiency” is a problem here. Why not be effective. Friday afternoons = if schools are in it is effective
- 4 day week to create more employment?
- Over a 6 year period we want max 30hr weeks (Common Weal). Thomas Pellathy on income
- Rich put their money into tax avoidance , OSSER and income
- This is why income and not tax is fixed wealth
- What about 16% tax rate? – no avoidance
- Flat tax = “showing” according to left. Regressive but only if inequality is high. Can’t start flat taxes on sleep mode distribution. Current situation is “farcical” and “absurd”
- “Solidarity wage” in Sweden. Raise wages at bottom and lower at the top. Concern about getting good bank managers was not resolved – little impact in attaching good workers.
- Global market reverse proportion. Reference to “News from Utopia”
- Individual income vs household income
- Any household incomes follow about a lot. But only useful if we know e.g. how many children, likelihood of marrying outside social class and geography (outwith 20 miles) is low. So low household money, more of the low incomes and vice versa. Could you live on £6k as a single, let alone as a family? If wages are higher, young people can get jobs
- What about local taxation?
- Follow Nordic nations. Local democracy. Not the case in Scotland. What would local taxation look like? So many options = needs lots of thought
- Local income tax ignored by Scotland after featuring in manifestos. Only 14% of Local Authorities taxes spent locally out with CoSLA grants
- Look at the practice elsewhere. My LA is 40 miles from me. Uniform everything everywhere or local democracy and differences. But latter leads to meaning about “postcode lottery”. Need to “grow up” and accept it
- Lack of transparency. If we knew how local decisions were made there would be more enthusiasm about local income taxes
- Concept of trust is important in Scandinavia. UK and Greece among lowest trust voting and in national government. Let people make wrong decisions themselves rather than being wrong decisions made for them. More trust in NHS than other areas
- Changing structures push in degeneration group
- Refill position in changing structures e.g. putting SDS and Job Centre together. Structural change rarely produces cultural change. Let’s focus on culture
- Older/younger people in political debate
- Administrative reorganisation in open/closed access more key. Open political parties or closed political parties? This is what we need to change not bureaucratic restructuring. Managers don’t work. In 25 years of uni mergers, no situation where cost of having a new body is lower than the two separate bodies

- Who is doing this redesign? It's never the stakeholders, their voice doesn't make a big difference in the end
- Is localism in Norway really a useful model for Scotland?
- Norway in EU – can't do market constrictors
- Re-skilling of 70s/80s/90s practices have led to problems here – but Scandinavian economy want it different
- The lower we pay in tax the more resistant we are to paying more taxes
- There is another way – only the greens have articulated another approach to the economy. Let's think wages first, tax second
- What do we do now – read the Common Weal