

The election of Donald Trump may be unappealing – but it’s hardly surprising, says Roger

Speaking at a meeting in his constituency, Roger gave his views on the result of the American elections. Said Roger: “A lot of people were shocked that somebody with as many flaws in his character as Donald Trump could become President of the most powerful country on earth, but while I very much regret the result I have to say that I was not at all surprised.

“It has been obvious since the financial crash in the western world in 2008/9 – caused by the greed of some people in the banking and financial sectors who took advantage of the lax regulations which had been brought in at their request - that there was an ever-increasing anger and rage throughout the western world by the many people who had suffered from, and been victims of, the march towards increasing globalisation and the neoliberal economic policies of privatisation and deregulation which had accompanied it.



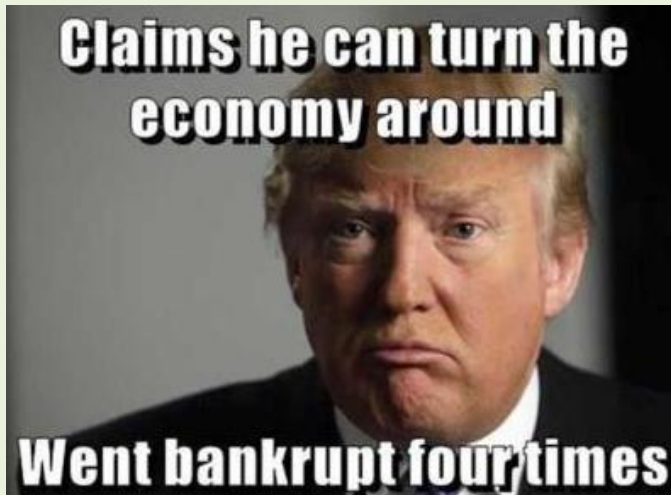
“Many people in the western world have seen their jobs destroyed or transferred to Asian or South American countries; the communities in which they lived allowed to stagnate and die as once thriving town centres turned into ghost towns; and inequality within societies rise as those at the top amassed vast fortunes while the

vast majority of people saw their living standards decline. The beneficiaries of globalisation have been workers in Asia and South America and transnational corporations, whereas the victims have been working people in many parts of the United Kingdom and in the once prosperous industrial mid-west of America.



“If you had held a job in the car industry in Michigan or the steel industry in Ohio and had been earning \$70,000 a year but had seen your job disappear to somewhere else in the world and you were now only earning \$30,000 a year, made up of doing two jobs, you were obviously going to be very disillusioned with the established politicians who had presided over this. If a demagogue like Donald Trump came along and said that he understood your anger and was going to do something about it then why wouldn’t you vote for him, even if you did not really believe what he was saying?

“The victory by Donald Trump was a massive vote against the established status quo and against multinational companies who avoid paying their fair share of taxes by sending their profits to exotic tax havens, and against trade deals which are promoted by big business in order to increase their profits.



“If Donald Trump does not honour the promises he has made, particularly with regard to jobs and free-trade deals, then public opinion in America could turn very quickly against him, but if 2016 proves to be the end of the financial orthodoxy which has prevailed since Reagan and Thatcher in the 1980s then one good thing might have come out these elections.”

Birmingham MPs write to Chancellor to ask for a fair funding deal for our city

The Birmingham group of nine Labour MPs, including Roger, wrote to Phillip Hammond MP to ask for a fair funding deal, and to warn that without one the consequences for Britain’s second city would be “catastrophic”.

The MPs wrote that: “Birmingham City Council has suffered the biggest cuts in local government history - and this reflects a gross unfairness in the way funding to the city has been calculated.

“The net effect of this is to create a shortfall of approximately £150m in the council finances next year, risking the closure of children’s centres, leisure centres, libraries and cutbacks to vital elderly care services.

“Birmingham was promised fairness but when the Government announced a £300 million transition fund, not one penny went to the city. 83p in every pound went to Tory shire counties and councils.”

The MPs called on the Chancellor to act to end the unfairness still built into the local government finance settlement for Birmingham. They wrote that: “Birmingham is great city, an ambitious city, a dynamic city but it is also a city of high need. The consequences of a £150 million black hole in the City’s budget next year are unthinkable. Unless the Government acts now, grave damage will be done to the social fabric of Birmingham and Brummies in need of care and support will be let down.”



A “nothing” budget from the new Chancellor

Roger described the first Autumn Statement from the new Chancellor Philip Hammond as a “missed opportunity”.

Speaking from Parliament the day following the statement, Roger commented: “The new government had an opportunity to do the right thing—both economically and in terms of fairness to the people of this country—and bury the discredited austerity agenda

once and for all. Events have clearly shown that pushing austerity at a time of economic uncertainty and contraction will only decrease demand and worsen the economy.

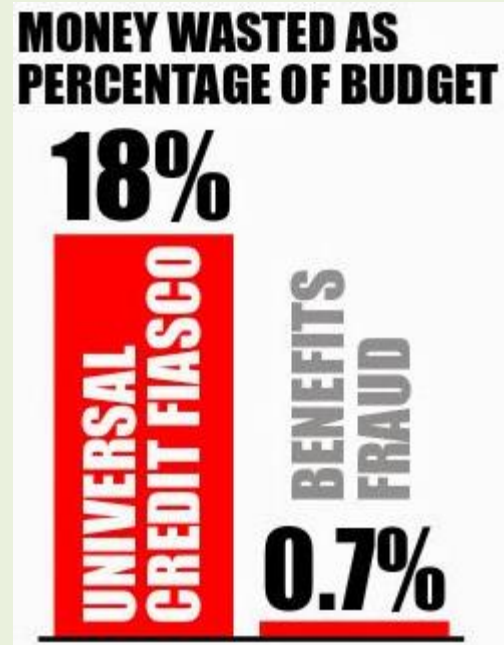
“The new government’s agenda of austerity-lite will do nothing to address the basic underlying problems of the UK economy, which are chronic under-investment and an unbalanced over-reliance on services, particularly financial services.



“It is also extremely disappointing that the Chancellor did not tackle low wages or the urgent need to invest in renewable sources of energy. Getting the UK off fossil fuels and onto sustainable power sources would both help to tackle the climate crisis and support job creation.”

Universal credit will not help lift families out of poverty

Roger remains concerned that universal credit will not help families to find work or get out of poverty. Working parents will lose hundreds or thousands of pounds when they are transferred onto the new benefit, Universal Credit, which will push families into poverty and make it harder for them to find work.



Universal Credit was billed as incentivising people to increase their working hours in order to increase their income. However, the miserly rates of tapering planned by the Government mean that in practice there is little incentive to do so. The marginal tax rate of UC is 75%, meaning that people receiving the minimum wage will take home just £1.89 per hour.

Following the Autumn Statement, the trade union USDAW stated that: “Over 90% of the cuts are still being applied to Universal Credit, which is a ticking time bomb that will leave many working families much worse off when they are transferred onto it. The Autumn Statement does little to deliver on the Prime Minister’s pledge to support families struggling to make ends meet.”

Usdaw’s analysis suggests that a couple with children, both working for the new National Living Wage rate of £7.50 an hour, one working full-time and one part-time, would be £2,881 worse off on Universal Credit compared to the current rate of tax credits.

Urgent need for more social housing

Between 1969 and 1989, councils in England built almost 1.5m homes. Between 1992 and 2012, they built fewer than 15,000 due to funding and regulatory constraints.

This is a disgrace, said Roger: “I frequently see the impact of lack of good quality, affordable social housing in my constituency. There is a desperate shortage of homes available, with vulnerable families forced to wait for years on waiting lists while living in over-crowded, poor quality houses. This has a huge impact on people’s quality of life and causes a lot of suffering.



“Investing hugely in social housebuilding, for example by permitting councils to borrow to build homes, would be a win-win situation. It would boost the economy, create jobs, improve the quality of housing available, and flatten out the increase in house prices which is making housing increasingly unaffordable. It would also save the Treasury money by reducing the amount spent on paying housing benefit to private landlords, who often charge high rents for poor quality housing. They are able to do this because of the chronic under-supply of housing. Sadly, I see no sign that the Conservative Government are planning to follow this sensible course of action.”

Hinckley C is a waste of money that could be spent on urgently-needed renewables, says Roger

“The Government’s decision go ahead with Hinckley C is a stupid one which will cost the country a fortune in years to come”, said Roger, following the Government’s announcement that the project was going ahead.

“I am not opposed to using nuclear power to meet the country’s energy needs although I would much prefer us to move to making far greater use of renewable energy sources.



“I am, however, totally opposed to the building of Hinckley C because the economics of it are absolutely ridiculous and I do not want such a sensitive infrastructure project to be in any way controlled by the Polit Bureau of the Chinese Communist Party which is what is going to happen because of the large Chinese investment!”

Grammar schools provide a good education for the privileged few at the expense of other children

Roger is opposed to the Conservatives’ plan to bring back grammar schools and increase selection by faith schools.

He said: “I strongly believe that state education should not be selective by either children’s parents’ religious faith, or by children’s exam marks at age 11. I am opposed to grammar schools because, although they may provide a good education for those children who attend them, they inevitably mean that other state

schools will be viewed as inferior as happened under the system which operated before comprehensive education was introduced the 60s and 70s.

“It is really unfair to deny equal opportunities to so many children, and the evidence clearly shows that results across the board are better in a comprehensive system. I believe that we should support a fully comprehensive system of schools under the control of local authorities, get rid of academies, grammar schools, and state funded faith schools, and work on bringing all comprehensives up to a high standard so all children have a good, secular education and there is a level playing field. All children have the right to flourish, and should receive equal opportunities to do so.”



Roger said: “I signed the pledge because I want the Government to stand up for the UK’s natural environment and natural heritage, and I hope my colleagues across Parliament will join me. In the wake of the referendum it’s vital for us to reassert the importance of a clean, green and healthy environment – whether that is in Hall Green, across the UK or overseas. The UK can, and should, be a world leader in dealing with environmental issues.”

Dozens of our environmental rules in the UK, including those leading to healthier beaches, cleaner air, and the protection of marine environments and rare species – from bitterns to butterflies – started life as European agreements, although in many cases they were originally devised and drafted by British Ministers and officials.

Roger tabled a Parliamentary Question to the Government on environmental protection post Brexit, which you can read [here](#).



Action on environmental protection following referendum vote

Roger is supporting stronger national action on the environment following the referendum vote. He signed a pledge to defend the UK’s countryside and wild places, and support UK action on climate change. The pledge also calls on the Government to ensure strong environmental standards are monitored. It has so far been signed by over 65 MPs from across the political spectrum.



Roger calls for UK citizens to have a voice on future trade deals

Roger has tabled an Early Day Motion calling for citizens to be able to shape future trade deals.

There has been a huge amount of opposition to the undemocratic trade deals - TTIP, CETA and TiSA. These agreements would gift a huge amount of power to corporations, at the expense of our democratic sovereignty, public services and natural environment. Following Brexit, the UK will have to negotiate a huge number of future trade deals. While this could be an opportunity to create trade deals which prioritise fair trade, sustainable development, clean energy and workers' rights, Roger has no confidence that these would be the Conservatives' priority in negotiations.

The EDM argues that the citizens of the UK and their representatives in local authorities and devolved administrations, as well as the UK Parliament, should have the ability to shape the UK's future trade deals rather than having them decided only by the UK Government. It calls on the Government to start putting in place structures to ensure that the process for negotiating future bilateral trade deals allows citizens, local governments and devolved authorities to play a leading role in setting the priorities and the terms for the UK's trade with the world.

You can read the EDM [here](#).

Condemnation of Cadbury's refusal to pay corporation tax

Yet again Roger strongly criticised Cadbury's failure to pay any corporation tax in the most recent tax year following the previous year in which the company also made no corporation tax contribution to the UK.



Cadbury, a chocolate company with a long history in Birmingham, is now owned by the UK branch of international conglomerate Mondelez. This year the company made profits of £177 million, but did not pay a single pound in corporation tax.

Commented Roger: "It is a disgrace that a foreign-owned multinational corporation can make such huge profits in the UK while avoiding paying corporation tax or making any contribution to public finances. They may argue that they pay business rates and create jobs, but by not paying corporation tax they are depriving the Treasury—and ordinary, tax-payers—of essential funds to pay for public facilities.

"Cadbury's benefit from public spending, from the roads on which their lorries drive to make deliveries, to the health service and schools which provide them with educated, healthy employees. They would also rely on the police and fire service if a major incident occurred at one of their establishments in this country. Much smaller companies with much lower profits than Cadbury's pay their fair share. Why should Cadbury get a free ride at the expense of UK citizens?"

Last year, the company made £96.5 million in profit but also failed to pay corporation tax. Roger tabled an Early Day Motion criticising this, which you can read [here](#).

UK’s arms sales to Saudi Arabia continues despite clear evidence of human rights violations in the Yemen.

Roger remains extremely concerned that the UK sold weapons to Saudi Arabia despite overwhelming evidence that they were being used against civilians and civilian infrastructure in Yemen. The Government had previously expressed its confidence that Saudi forces had not committed war crimes in Yemen, but was then forced to correct these assertions.

He tabled an Early Day Motion criticising the Government’s decision to issue these corrections just as Parliament was about to rise for the summer recess, which was an attempt to avoid scrutiny and accountability.



Said Roger: “Given all the evidence in the public domain documenting these war crimes, the Government either knew, or ought to have known, that its statements denying wrongdoing by Saudi armed forces were false.

“Despite this acknowledgement by the Government that Saudi Arabia is in fact committing war crimes by targeting civilians and non-military infrastructure in Yemen, the UK is continuing to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia. I remain concerned that these weapons may be used to commit war crimes in Yemen by the Saudi regime, which is a dictatorship with no regard for democracy or human rights.

“Continuing to sell arms to the Saudi regime both enables and condones violence against civilians, and the

UK’s standing in the world is diminished by this action. I strongly urge the Government to urgently reconsider its arms export policy to Saudi Arabia in light of these corrections, and to prioritise the safety of civilians in Yemen and the UK’s reputation in the world over the profits of arms companies.”

Support your local community pharmacies says Roger

Roger has joined a campaign opposing the Government’s plan to cut the budget for local chemists, after talks between the Government and the sector broke down. Negotiations on a new package of funding for community pharmacies have ceased, and the Government is set to push through a funding cut that could force thousands of chemists to close across the country.



The Government’s initial plan to cut £170 million from the community pharmacy budget – a cut of 6 per cent – was put on hold after pressure from campaigners, but a new round of damaging cuts could now be imposed by the Government.

The Government’s own figures have shown that the £170 million cut could force up to 3,000 community pharmacies – one in four across the country – to close their doors to the public, placing pharmacies in Birmingham and across the UK at risk.

Roger is opposing the cuts. He said: “The Government should drop their damaging plan to cut community pharmacies and get back around the negotiating table with the sector. These cuts would be bad for our local community. Many people, including young families and

elderly people, rely on them for free medical advice and prescription medicine.

“The Government’s plan is also a false economy for the NHS, because community pharmacies save the NHS money. Cutting them will only add more costs in the long run to our struggling, chronically under-funded health service. The Government should think again urgently before it is too late.”

Poor quality disability benefit assessments by Capita place at risk the wellbeing of seriously ill people

An Early Day Motion has been tabled by Roger condemning the poor quality of disability benefits assessments being carried out by Capita. He has heard from a number of constituents who were extremely distressed following their assessment. Capita’s employees had ignored people’s health problems and disabilities and described them as being much less ill than was actually the case, which led to the DWP cutting the benefits which they relied on to survive. People then had to go through the time-consuming and extremely stressful mandatory reconsideration and appeal process in order to remedy this.

Commented Roger: “I am extremely concerned that no mechanism exists to challenge inaccurate reports directly with Capita, rather than by going through the lengthy and stressful Department for Work and Pensions mandatory reconsideration and appeals process. There is a very high success rate for personal independence payment (PIP) claimants who go through this appeals process, which suggests that serious problems exist within the assessment process.



“I am concerned that Capita is using assessors who are insufficiently trained, do not care about claimants' wellbeing or lack sufficient medical knowledge of individuals' conditions to produce an accurate report.

“While I fully support the Government's decision to stop reassessing people with incurable or degenerative conditions for employment and support allowance. I am calling on them to look into the current PIP assessment process to decide whether it is fit for purpose, and if the companies carrying it out are able to do so competently and without causing additional distress.”

You can read the EDM [here](#). Constituents who are having problems with the disability benefits assessment process, or who are being transferred from DLA to PIP, are welcome to get in touch with Roger’s office at the House of Commons.

New law on homelessness

Roger is a supporter of a Private Members Bill to help tackle homelessness, which is currently going through Parliament. As it stands, the law on homelessness leaves many people unable to access help, and many others unable to get help before the point when they actually become homeless.



Roger with constituent Gareth for the Crisis lobby on the homelessness Bill

If passed, the new law would help to prevent people from losing their home in the first place and make sure all homeless people can get help when they need it, whilst continuing to protect families with children from homelessness.

Said Roger: "This is about basic social justice. Nobody should be forced to sleep rough because they can't get the help they need, in Birmingham or anywhere else. It's time we took action. We need to make sure that anyone facing homelessness can get help, before they actually lose their home. That's why I'm backing the Homelessness Reduction Bill put forward by Bob Blackman MP."

Outsourcing of essential public services goes horribly wrong once again and has to be brought back in-house. When will Government learn from these mistakes, asks Roger



HMRC decided to bring the Concentrix tax credits contract back in-house after a number of serious errors were made. Claimants had been wrongly accused and had credits stopped, despite being entitled to receive them and relying on them to care for their families.

Following the outcry over the mess made by private sector contractor Concentrix, the services the company provided will be brought back in-house by HMRC.

Mark Serwotka, the general secretary of the trade union for HMRC staff, PCS, said: "We're delighted HMRC has agreed with us this work is best carried out in-house and, crucially, has accepted our argument to protect the jobs of Concentrix staff by transferring them in to the department. We will be pushing for these workers to be employed on the same terms as their HMRC colleagues."

"Sadly, this could all have been avoided and the fiasco is further evidence it is a false economy to hive off important public services."

Misappropriation of public funds at Perry Beeches academy trust shows why profit-driven organisations should not be gifted essential public services

Following revelations in October that Perry Beeches Academy Trust was running a deficit of £2.1 million, Roger strongly criticised the financial misappropriation and greed which led to this situation.



This academy trust was run by former chief executive Liam Nolan who, after being lauded by the Conservative Government, resigned in May following revelations that the trust had wrongly diverted almost £1.3 million of public funds into a company which he owned.

The off-the-books payments were made to a company called Nexus Schools Limited, and were omitted from the trust's accounts. Nexus then paid the funds to a subcontractor company called Liam Nolan Limited which, surprisingly enough, had Liam Nolan as its only director. This was clearly a mechanism for diverting taxpayers' money, which should have been spent on education, into Nolan's pockets.

Commented Roger: "This disgraceful incident shows why public services must not be sold off—or, in the case of our schools, given away—to private institutions owned by profit-orientated companies or greedy individuals. While schools remain under local authority control, they are run for the public good, accountable to the taxpayer and the council, have parent governors, and held to strict financial standards.

"When schools are run privately, there are few limits on the amount of public funds which can be appropriated by those who run them. Nolan has clearly broken the rules, if not also the law, and yet because of the lax rules on academies he will not be prosecuted for this act of theft.

"This is not an isolated incident, but a clear indication of what will happen when structures of accountability are taken away and the profit motive is introduced to our education system. Children's education will suffer as greedy chancers such as Nolan extract all they can from our schools. Yet despite this, the Government are attempting to force every school in the country to

become an academy, against the clear wishes of most staff, teachers and parents. It is utter madness and I fear that our children will be the ones to pay the price for this forced privatisation."



Birmingham University has no excuse not to pay decent wages

Roger has written to the Vice Chancellor of Birmingham University to express his disappointment and concern that the university is refusing to pay staff, many of whom live in his constituency, the living wage despite having a significant budget surplus.

At present 513 staff at the university are paid below the independently agreed Living Wage of £8.45 per hour, condemning them and their families to a life of poverty and deprivation. These employees include cleaning, catering and library staff, who carry out essential work without which the university could not function.

In his letter to the Vice Chancellor, Roger wrote: “I strongly urge you to stop viewing these employees as overheads to be slashed, and start seeing them as dedicated staff who deserve a decent wage.

“I note that the university’s income is more than £577 million per year, with a surplus of more £30 million per year. Paying the Living Wage would cost the University less than £160,000 per year. Given this financial situation, it is utterly disgraceful to force staff into poverty in order to scrimp on such a relatively small amount.”



If you would like to contact the university to ask them to pay all their staff a living wage, you can email the Vice Chancellor at d.eastwood@bham.ac.uk

Clothes sold on British high streets manufactured by Syria refugee children in Turkey

Roger has written to the head of the British Retail Consortium and the Minister at the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy to express his concern at the recent news reports by BBC Panorama that clothes sold on British high streets are being manufactured by children, including Syrian refugees.

As chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Syria, he wrote following the extremely worrying reports that vulnerable refugee children in Turkey, who are forced

to work in order to survive, are being paid at below the legal rates and working in dangerous and unhealthy conditions. The clothes they produce are sold on UK high streets by well-known brands including Asos, Mango, Next and Zara.

Roger wrote in his letter: “I am sure that you would agree that it is utterly unacceptable for shops to profit from selling clothes produced in such exploitative, illegal conditions by children who have been forced to flee a war of unimaginable brutality.” He also asked the Minister whether the Government are taking any action to eliminate such exploitation and ensure that UK consumers are not inadvertently buying these products.

Stronger penalties for drivers who use mobile phones at the wheel

Roger has called for stronger penalties to address the ongoing problem of drivers using mobile phones at the wheel, which is dangerous and against the law.

In 2014, 1.6 per cent of all drivers in England and Scotland were observed using a hand-held mobile telephone while driving. Research shows that using a phone while driving makes the driver's reactions 50 per cent slower, and makes them four times more likely to crash.





Said Roger: "I support the Government's decision to increase the fine for using a phone while driving from three penalty points and a fine of £100 to six penalty points and a fine of £200. However, I am concerned that this is still too low to fully reflect the risk to other road users. I believe that a disqualification for all drivers who use a mobile telephone while driving, along with a fine of £1,000, would be more appropriate as a deterrent. I have seen drivers in my constituency racing around roundabouts holding mobile phones! This is utter madness and needs to be stopped."

For help and advice, please see the 'Helplines' section of Roger's website, available at www.rogergodsiffmp.co.uk/helplineAdvice.php, or [here](#).

You can also follow Roger on twitter at @RogerGodsiff



Happy Christmas and season's greetings from Roger and all his team in London and Birmingham, and best wishes for the new year to all in Birmingham Hall Green!

