

Political transvestites

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2007-10-1

Nick [Robinson](#), the BBC's political editor, has re-employed a well-worn cliché to describe the current fight for the political centre ground: 'stealing each others clothes'. He points out how Gordon Brown used a whole series of Tory phrases and ideas at Labour Conference last week, such as his call for tougher sentences and jobs for the British. Today George Osborne the Tory shadow chancellor [announced](#) what sounds like a socialist policy. He wants to raise a new levy on millionaires who live in this country but pay tax (very little usually) elsewhere. This is all supposed to prove that the two parties are identical. Well, it's not true, and people like Nick Robinson should work harder at showing the differences instead of falling for Labour and Tory spin about how moderate they both are.

George Osborne's levy proposal looks to me like the traditional defence by the Conservatives of hard-working billionaires. In exchange for a relatively trivial levy the Treasury will promise not to chase the vast amounts of tax that 'non-domiciled' business people avoid paying. For those of us who can't afford expensive accountants to find tax havens in the Caribbean it is galling. But as Gordon Brown found out as Chancellor it is very hard to do anything about in a globalised economy. So Osborne's policy may be wise and the money it raises may well help first-time home buyers. But it is not a socialist policy. And likewise Gordon Brown, despite Lady Thatcher's appearance at Number 10, has not turned in to a little Englander.

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