



Behind the populist and political gestures in last week's

Budget, George Osborne revealed he has not abandoned the North of England and that he sees the role of makers and doers as being critical to all our futures.

It may no longer be fashionable in Westminster to talk about manufacturing, but last week's Budget signaled that the coalition government – or the Chancellor at least – understands that, if we are to re-balance the economy, we need to recognise that those who make things are every bit as important to our prosperity as those who market, distribute, and finance them.

The headlines following George Osborne's Spring Budget suggested the Chancellor was tilting the tax landscape in the direction of the 'makers, doers and savers' – a much-derided collection of people among the London chattering classes, but one that Tory strategists have identified as a crucial demographic in the run-up to the next election.

'If you're a maker, a doer or a saver: this Budget is for you,' the Chancellor said.

In identifying the 'makers' of things as crucial to rectifying the previous government's disastrous dependency on the financial, casino economy, the Chancellor is opting instead for a slower, but more sustainable level of growth: a tacit acknowledgement, perhaps, of a former Tory Prime Minister's famous dictum that governments and countries should not spend beyond their means. Welcome though this shift in emphasis will have been in the Midlands and the North of England, Osborne's Budget rhetoric also revealed that the Chancellor has not yet fully grasped the radically changed nature of advanced manufacturing as practiced in the Sheffield city region, and elsewhere in the north.

When he unveiled policies on energy that would support the nation's 'steel makers' and 'chemical plants' he was using a language that is more than half a century out of date. The advanced technologies being developed and deployed by manufacturers across the so-called Sheffield City Region have nothing to do with the making of steel. Our advanced manufacturers are at the cutting edge of the knowledge economy, and centuries removed from crude forms of metal bashing.