Government's simply not good enough to get us out of the mire; Columnist.

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DEMOCRATIC politics is the art of persuading people to believe in your message but demonstrating you can be trusted to make a difference.

On the one hand, that is where ideology comes in - saying how your plans fit with an accepted view of the way the world should be.

On the other hand, where extremist parties regularly fail is that for all their simplistic anti-minority sloganeering, they lack capacity to manage even the proverbial drinking session in a brewery. Good politicians understand that there is a time when delivering results for the majority trumps the need to deliver eye-catching measures popular with your most fanatical supporters.

Given the adulatory coverage of Chancellor George Osborne, I'd expect this to be his deepest gut instinct.

But he's like a man standing in the brewery telling us he just can't get the taps to fit while everyone is dying for a drink!

The Liberal Democrats' former strategy director said as much in a recent pamphlet. Despite interest rates and capital prices being at historic low levels, and British infrastructure crying out for investment, the Chancellor was fixated on choking both spending and the British economy.

Blinded by ideology, the coalition Government are incapable of taking decisions in the country's best interests.

Their obsessions with privatising the NHS and wrecking the rest of the public sector have overtaken the need to achieve anything positive.

Even their landmark policies are suffering from the wrecking ball they are swinging across the British government landscape. The Regional Growth Fund was one of these, replacing the unloved regional development agencies with direct funding for job creation in areas overly dependent on public sector jobs.

I thought they realised that if they needed one policy to show their approach worked, it was this one. I was sure that they'd pull out all the stops to make sure that the Regional Growth Fund became a picture boy for the private sector leading economic development.

Instead, as a recent Parliamentary public accounts committee showed, this government can't even channel money effectively to the private sector.

The vast majority of the funds are unspent or languishing with intermediary bodies, ironically many of them in the public sector.

In the name of private sector efficiency, the people running the fund couldn't even give MPs a clear answer on where the money was being kept or what is was being used for. They couldn't give MPs

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assurances that the money was being well-spent other than that the benefits outweighed the costs.

That last assurance means nothing, by the way. Benefits always outweigh costs. If I spend a pound on a chocolate bar, the shop owner, truck driver, chocolate manufacturer and tax man all get their share of the pound, and I get a chocolate bar to boot. But that's not a good argument for spending public money on chocolate bars.

Even though the North East has been disproportionately hit by this egregious failure, I don't think there's a specific regional vindictiveness this time. Frankly, the government are simply not good enough - no one benefits from this shambles, even their own supporters.

Perhaps we should be pleased - they've bought into all the arguments for running everything from London and by the private sector, and it's been an utter, abject shambles. They've achieved the almost-impossible, and made people yearn for the return of the regional development agencies, or at least sensible regional policy.

Now can someone in London please tell that to Ed Miliband. Hopefully the next government will after three decades finally come up with a less half-baked plan for our collective economic future here in the North East.

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