

Sajid Javid MP – CPS Report Event – 16.05.19 (verbatim)

Thank you Nick, it's great to be here at the CPS, whenever I'm here I'm always reminded of its founder the great Margaret Thatcher. Someone who knew instinctively understood small business, the need to support small business and she did that throughout her time as the leader of our great country.

I guess one of the reasons she understood small business was no doubt because she was the daughter of a shopkeeper and that's something we've got in common because I know I'm sure all of you at some point have probably heard me say my dad was a bus driver, probably one too many times, but what I have not said much is that the reason that my dad was a bus driver was he wanted to get a job that could just give him enough savings so that he could do what was burning away in his heart which was to start his own business.

And he did manage to do that after a few years and he started with market stalls selling ladies' clothing and then he managed to buy a shop which me and the whole family lived above the shop and I used to as a child I used to I remember helping with the shop and actually trying to rush home from school sometimes, rush into the till trying to sell things and the market stall, you know, trying to sell wearing the money belt, and enjoying all that.

It was a ladies' clothing shop and I remember selling the blouses, the tights, the skirts and you could say that I know more about ladies clothing than any other male MP. I don't want that misinterpreted or misreported in any way please. But my story and Margaret Thatcher's story, that link to small business, is of course a story for countless people, millions of people throughout our country.

And they would all share with you very similar stories. And what it tells you is that small business is woven through the fabric of our country, 5.5 million businesses, all of them run by people from many different backgrounds, different races, men and women, people of all types, running these businesses and they are running them in our towns, in our cities in our villages, they are online and they're not just generating vital employment and wealth.

What they are, they are the very heart of our society and that's why they're so important and that's why I'm very happy to be here today to welcome this report that's been done by CPS and Nick, and I think it's a very important contribution to the debate.

Because what I've seen from this report, the underlying idea is maybe I could express it this way, is that the needs of small business, they are different to the needs of big business. Now whilst that might be obvious, what I have found including my time in government too, that it is not surprisingly, it is big business that is often knocking on the doors of government, I found that when I was the treasury minister, certainly as business secretary, because you can see why big business is often more organised, better financed, has the best advisers, the best business groups, you know so well-oiled that they can get, try to get in front of everyone that they can and often they will make their case. There's nothing wrong with making your case the problem is they're not making the case of small business.

I can certainly think of at least a few times when businesses came to me when I was business secretary, big businesses and what they propose to you is some exciting new bold pro-business idea, it was actually a pro big business idea, often set out in a way to try and stop small businesses from competing with them and taking away some of their customers.

Because we all know here today the reason why we support the CPS, the reason we like what we see is that when it comes to capitalism you have the best economic system that there can be to generate the jobs and the wealth that we need, to improve our standards of living, that at its very foundation is that it needs to be set up in a way that it helps the small businesses compete.

Competition is at the very core of small businesses and what that means that we need a level playing field when it comes to small business, but when you look at that field now what I see

often, too often, are some bumps and boulders and some potholes and things and it's anything but level. So, we need to do more to try and fix that and that's what I see in this report today by Nick and the team.

And take for example Nick's proposal on tax and what that goes to the heart of is that it recognises that whilst small business they sometimes struggle to pay their bills, whether tax bills or other bills and I remember my dad, his business it had its ups and downs I could see how the family mood change sometimes when a bill arrives and you're going to wonder are you going to have the business over the next few weeks, the next few months, to actually meet that bill, could you be in trouble?

But when those bills arrive for small businesses it can be of huge concern but at the same time these businesses they look around and they see the big businesses often the tech businesses today, the big multi-national corporations and certainly some of the more modern tech businesses. And whilst the small businesses are paying their fair share of tax, they see these tech businesses pay what I would say is a piddling share of tax if anything at all. That is not fair, it's not right and it's not acceptable.

And there is some work that of course the government has already started to try and level that playing field, the digital services tax, but I don't think we are going far enough yet and we need to do much more to make sure that the big online businesses that they pay their fair share of tax.

You know it's our responsibility to make sure that taxes on business are low, that they are simple and that they are fair, and the CPS again is doing great work to try and put all of this into practice and I've seen for myself just how hard people that run small businesses, that start small businesses, how hard they work, the risks that they take and that needs to be recognised and it needs to be rewarded but above all we need to have a fair level playing field.

And it is absolutely right what Nick just said that we as the Conservative party that we do more to reclaim our position as the party of business but especially the party of small business because when you look after small business you look after Britain.