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Frank Field MP as a man of principle

For two reasons, the nation should surely be grateful to Frank Field.

First, he has demonstrated by his resignation that there are still people in politics who will put the service of principle ahead of their own wellbeing.

Secondly, he has presented in acute form a social choice that faces us all.

Mr Field believes, in line with Clement Attlee, that for our own good the State should compel each one of us to save all through our working days for the sake of our retirement and old age. Legislation should force us to put a little money aside, month by month and year by year, to build up a fund. Out of the income from this our pensions will be paid for as long as we survive.

Apparently Mr Gordon Brown takes a different view and supports legislation to give means-tested help to those elderly inhabitants who in former times would have been cared for by the Poor Law, with the State supplying their needs out of current taxation. Otherwise, what people choose to do with their money is their own concern.

While saluting Mr Field as a man of principle, I am sure many will side with Mr Brown's desire to limit state interference to cases of necessity.¹

¹ *The Times*, 5 August 1998.