THE dust begins to settle after Theresa May's snap election as the unexpected coalition negotiations saw the victorious Tories prepare to jettison many cherished positions to shore up their Commons majority.

In sucking up to with the Democratic Unionists, they found themselves up against some of Britain's canniest political operators.

Northern Ireland's deep schism raised a generation of politicians skilled at driving hard bargains in compromising with their sworn enemies.

And the DUP put those skills to dramatic effect in extracting the best price for propping up May's Government. Those ten DUP votes came at a price of one billion pounds that Theresa May suddenly found despite us all thinking there's no money left.

This week's Queen's Speech has seen Tories lining up alongside DUP MPs to extend the pay freeze for teachers, fire officers, police offices and nurses. Indeed Theresa May famously rebuked a nurse during the election campaign asking for a rise by telling her to stop believing that there was a Magic Money Tree.

But the price ticket that the PM has met paid to form her weak and wobbly coalition with loyalist politicians reminds us that austerity is always selective, with affluence for the strong and squalor for the weak.

Only when an MP like Stella Creasey this week plays on her fellow parliamentarians morals can the Government be forced to do a U-turn and behave decently.

This bodes all too ill for the North East, with no pressure to heal the economic and social wounds caused by seven year's unnecessary austerity.

With spending already cut to the bone, Tory policy is choking the life out of our region, yet Whitehall seems oblivious to the pain that its bloodletting causes.

There's no obvious leaders to step up and channel their constituents righteous anger at the Tories needless hardship. Certainly, there are no likely North East Tory rebels who'll dig in their heels to demand fair treatment for us in return for supporting May's wafer-thin minority So it was a delight this week as the Tories descended further into their mire to witness an impressive new regional voice. In a barnstorming maiden commons speech, Durham MP Laura Pidcock took furious, deadly aim at the Government's threadbare North East offer.

She eloquently set out her constituents' daily struggles, needlessly aggravated by a remote, bureaucracy blind to their suffering. She plaintively set out the case for a new kind of politics to better serve our region's needs.
Her local burr was a refreshing tonic in a London bubble where our regional accents are rarely heard. And she pointed to the many ways that the flummery and formality of Westminster systematically pushed her and her constituents' voices to the fringes of the debate.

Her firebrand performance may have finally made North West Durham's voice audible to our indifferent London masters. But the wider question remains of who will speak up for the North East as the government wrestles with the self-imposed economic car crash that Brexit will be bringing.

There's going to be an unprecedented level of turbulence that strikes at the heart of what remains of our regional industrial base. As foreign investors withdraw and their suppliers go bust, we should brace ourselves for more of the mealy-mouthed Tory ministerial handringing that accompanied the closure of Teesside's last steel plant.

So we must look to a new generation of talented regional MPs, like Laura Pidcock, Chi Onwurah and Catherine McKinnell from the 2010 generation to keep the heat on the Government. Now, more than ever, we need these new North East voices to stop us becoming the suckers paying the price for May's shabby unionist venture.

Dr Paul Benneworth is Senior Research Associate, University of Twente, Netherlands

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