



George Osborne, the Chancellor Photo: Julian Simmonds/The Telegraph

Frozen pensions for Britons abroad

British pensioners living abroad deserve the income they have paid for but are denied in old age.

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SIR – George Osborne’s announcement of the abolition of the 55 per cent “death tax” () will be welcomed by pensioners finally allowed to leave more of their pension pot to loved ones.

We would also ask the Government to give 550,000 pensioners living abroad with a frozen state pension the income they have paid for but are denied in old age.

The British Government freezes the state pensions of those living in many Commonwealth countries and an indiscriminate selection of other locations. Those pensions are never to rise again, regardless of living costs. Pensioners, having made mandatory National Insurance payments while in Britain, receive the same state pension as when

they first retired abroad. Some receive less than a quarter of the pension they would if they had retired to many other countries.

Offering financial assistance to a family after a relative's death is to be applauded, but surely it is more important to pay living pensioners their rightful due so that they can live in dignity in their old age.

Sheila Telford

Chairman, International Consortium of British Pensioners
Calgary, Canada

SIR – Recent EU accusations of tax avoidance, and the charge of collusion between large companies such as Apple and Starbucks and governments, will be viewed with interest by small taxpayers accused of tax avoidance for entering into tax planning schemes which they had been advised were entirely legitimate. While larger players debate what is legal and what is a “special” deal, smaller players can expect to receive “follower notices” or “advanced payment notices” from HM Revenue & Customs, using its extensive new powers.

For this latter group of taxpayers there are immediate adverse consequences, no scope to appeal, and only an ill-defined right to make representations to the issuer of the notices (HMRC), which is judge and jury on whether to accept representations.

Andrew Watters

Director, Thomas Eggar
London EC2

Immigration rules

SIR – Why is it harder for my South African daughter-in-law of 10 years to enter the country with her British husband (than it is for a Latvian murderer?

Susan Gorton

Abingdon-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

Scoff between stops

SIR – Darren Johnson, a Green member of the London Assembly, extols the virtues of travelling by bus (). Unfortunately, less sociable habits such as eating, and sharing, takeaway meals – at any time of day or night – seem to have accompanied the 64 per cent increase in bus trips being undertaken in London.

It would be a joy to visitors from the rest of the country if Mr Johnson used his influence to address this unwelcome development.

Malcolm Watson

Welford, Berkshire

Liberated duchesses

SIR – If 43 per cent of people believe the Duchess of Cambridge represents “a step forward for women” (), could someone explain what that step actually is? To me a step forward would be an independent career without reliance on one’s husband for title and position.

Yvonne Carse

Launceston, Cornwall

High Heathrow prices

SIR – You argue that expanding Gatwick could promote competition with Heathrow and lead to reduced costs for passengers. But it is political inertia on building new runways that is pushing up prices for consumers, not a lack of competition. Heathrow has been unable to add more flights for a decade but demand has increased, resulting in ticket prices going up.

Independent research by Frontier Economics estimates that passengers travelling through Heathrow are already paying an average of £95 more for a return ticket than they would if Heathrow had a third runway. According to this research, by 2030, the average return ticket price could be £300 less with a Heathrow expansion – even after construction costs.

Expanding capacity at Heathrow is the low-fare option. Supply would meet demand, there would be greater competition between airlines at Britain's hub, and passengers would be better off.

Jonathan Sandbach

Chief Economist, Heathrow
Hounslow, Middlesex

Anti-German feeling

SIR – My mother and I returned to London in April 1946, after being PoWs first for three months with the German navy, having been captured at sea, and then for more than three years in the terrible Fukushima PoW camp in northern Japan.

Back in London, my mother packed a large parcel of clothing and food. When she went to post it in Ladbroke Grove, there was practically a riot: she was showered with a stream of the most vindictive abuse.

She explained that the package was for the family of German Captain Jaeger, who had been kind to her and her son in 1942 and was now living in a bomb-shattered cellar in Hamburg. But the Londoners were having none of this ().

The relentless random bombs had frayed Londoners' nerves to shreds. Any German was a "bad-un". Helping them was out of the question – and totally unpatriotic.

Michael Charnaud

Newdigate, Surrey

An ounce of sense?

SIR – David Cameron told Evan Davis that he favours. Could the Prime Minister translate, into ounces, a fifth, sixth, or seventh of a pound?

Rob Reynolds

Staplefield, West Sussex

How Britain could win the nuclear power war

SIR – Nuclear reactor research and development has suffered a 99 per cent budget cut in the past 20 years. A country that can find nearly £3 billion a year in order to decommission old nuclear facilities, but which cannot muster a thousandth of that to research next-generation fission technology, has its priorities all wrong Business, September 25).

The Government must once again make Britain fertile ground for research and development, starting by revitalising the country's nuclear research base. Politicians should be bold enough to demand it.

Cheaper, safer and cleaner molten salt reactors are being recognised round the world as groundbreaking technology. Why not make a commitment to research and develop them fully in Britain?

David Martin

Chief Executive, Alvin Weinberg Foundation

London WC2

SIR – News that power produced from wind turbines fell by a fifth in the second quarter of this year , September 26), despite their installed capacity growing significantly, should concern policymakers. Britain has had two particularly mild winters, but this will not remain the case every year.

Over the past two years a number of large coal-fired and oil-fired power stations have been closed to meet European Union directives, and two large nuclear plants are being closed owing to reactor faults.

Ofgem, the Government's energy watchdog, recently warned that electricity-generating margins will drop to 2 per cent next winter.

This could be exacerbated by long windless days and more plant closures, leading to price spikes and electricity rationing.

The immediate priority must be to abandon the carbon price floor, which will otherwise force the closure of up to 10 remaining coal-fired power stations within eight years, leaving a large generating hole. We should also prioritise building modern coal and gas plants.

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