

A People's BBC

The licence fee has had its day. The government should decriminalise it, leaving it as a bill like any other. More people are going to give up the tv set and live programmes.

The government should give every licence fee payer a share in the BBC on a stated date. Then the share holder licence payers can decide who should run their People's BBC and what its strategy should be. The government could negotiate a contract for the BBC to provide whatever public service broadcasting it thought it needed, which would include the World Service, and pay for this from general taxes. It could alternatively put out to tender the public service work allowing others to bid. We need to see exactly what they think public service broadcasting is and what it costs.

Freed of the licence fee entrapment the BBC would be free to raise new share capital, to take out longer term borrowings, and to exploit its excellent back book of material more effectively. It should aim to become a major world media corporation capable of taking on the mega stars of the current US dominated media world.

So that it remained British the shares could contain a restriction on sales, only allowing sale to other UK citizens.

A budget with tax cuts

I see discussion from Treasury sources of a Spring budget with tax cuts, based on updating benefit payments by a smaller amount than the current system would provide next April. This is a bad idea.

It is a bad idea because we need the tax cuts now, not delayed to next Spring. The economy is slowing badly thanks to clumsy Bank of England actions driving rates so high and selling bonds at low prices. We need tax cuts now to stop a drift into recession and provide the growth the Prime Minister has promised.

It is a bad idea because there are many easier and more sensible ways of cutting public spending. Why doesn't the Treasury tell the Bank to stop selling bonds at big losses – £24 bn so far this financial year – all losses which the Treasury and taxpayer has to pay for? Why doesn't the Chief Secretary complete his review of public sector productivity which has nosedived in the last three years and put in measures to boost it? Why doesn't the government impose a ban on all new external recruitment into the public services save for trained medics, teachers and uniformed personnel?

The government needs to review the huge costs of the net zero programme, stated to be a total public and private £1.3 tn up to 2050 by the Climate change Committee. It needs to be brought down for the government by re phasing and by relying more on private sector investment and technical advances and less on government subsidy.

The tax cuts we need include ending the IR 35 changes to the self employed, increasing the VAT threshold for small businesses to £250,000, reducing taxes on energy to get inflation down quicker, cutting corporation tax and reducing the carbon taxes which are pricing the UK out of industrial activity. Getting on with producing gas and oil from fields already discovered in the North Sea would help the balance of payments and boost tax revenues.

The way to tackle the welfare bills is to speed up the programmes the government is designing to help more UK people into work. We could then also issue fewer work permits to migrants, cutting the costs of housing and other facilities for low paid new arrivals.

[My appearance on BBC Radio 4's The Reunion – The Final Years of John Major's Government](#)

Please find below the link to an interview that I took part in discussing the final years of John Major's Government

You can find it here on BBC Sounds:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001q0kh>

I was argued against the UK joining the Exchange rate Mechanism, predicting the troubles it could cause our economy. I took up the battle against the loss of the pound following the Maastricht Treaty discussions. I resigned from the government to get policy change, especially wanting a guarantee that a Conservative government would use the UK's opt out from joining the Euro. I helped secure the promise of a referendum before destroying the pound from both main parties. I knew the British people would never vote to surrender their currency.

My Intervention on the Ministerial Statement- Work Capability Assessment Consultation

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):

I strongly support the initiative to help more people who are long-term sick and disabled into work where they wish to do that. My query is: why on earth is it going to take so long? We need to be doing this now, to ease our workplace shortages and to give those people earlier support and hope. Will my right hon. Friend please work with his officials to speed it all up?

Mel Stride, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions:

I share my right hon. Friend's keenness to see these proposals—whatever may or may not emerge—come forward as soon as possible. They will require a lot of work on IT systems and changes to systems. The providers will have to incorporate the changes that may or not come forward as a result of this consultation. Let me reassure him that, given the benefits there will be to many people who will otherwise not benefit from work, I am as anxious as he is to make sure that we move forward at speed.

My Interventions in the Energy Bill (2)

John Redwood (Wokingham, Conservative):

If this electrical revolution is to take off, many more people will need to buy electric cars and heat pumps. Does the hon. Gentleman have any advice for the Government on how those items can be made more popular and more affordable?

Dr Alan Whitehead (Southampton, Labour):

The Government and I have been in considerable discussion about precisely that point. We need to make sure we change the model of ownership of those devices. We perhaps need to have a longer debate about that on another occasion.