

Chancellor must commit to 'triple lock' at Budget

In a speech today on intergenerational fairness Labour's Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary will demand that the Chancellor 'commit' in the Budget to 'guarantee the triple lock on state pensions beyond 2020'.

The Government hinted that they may cut the triple lock in order to "tackle the challenge of rising longevity." This led to accusations that the Tories were 'abandoning older people'.

Labour has made a commitment to maintaining the triple lock under the next Labour government, alongside other pensioner benefits.

Debbie

Abrahams MP, Labour's Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary commenting on concerns that the Government has refused to commit to the triple lock said:

"It was shocking to hear the Chancellor suggest that he would expose older people to the flawed austerity agenda – further proof that the Tories are abandoning older people.

"The last Labour government were responsible for a historic reduction in pensioner poverty levels. A record that we remain hugely proud of.

"The Chancellor must use this Budget to provide clarity on the issue of the triple lock, and follow Labour's lead by committing to the policy beyond 2020."

H7N9 patient leaves hospital in southwest China

A 58-year-old male patient who had tested positive for the H7N9 avian flu virus in southwest China's Sichuan Province has been cured and left the hospital on Tuesday, provincial health authorities said.

The man was treated in a hospital in Suining city of Sichuan. He was the first H7N9 patient in Sichuan, the provincial health and family planning commission said.

"His temperature is normal and he shows no symptoms of infection," said He

Zhengguang, head of the Suining city H7N9 prevention experts' team.

As of the end of last week, at least 270 H7N9 human infections had been reported in China, with 87 fatalities. Most cases were around the Yangtze and Pearl river deltas.

China's State Council called for continued efforts in prevention and control of the H7N9 bird flu outbreak.

The government ordered better management of live poultry markets, including closure, sanitation and quarantine.

H7N9 was first reported in humans in China in March 2013 and is most likely to strike in winter and spring.

Bus currency counters: Counting US\$2,900 daily

In Kunming, there is a group of female bus currency counters who wear blue uniforms and count tens of thousands of small bills and coins every day.

There are 4,000 buses receiving about US\$174,000 in cash daily, which means that each of the bus currency counters needs to count at least US\$2,180 in small bills and coins daily. Xiao Qiong, who has been working as a bus currency counter for 10 years, said the average daily counting amount is US\$2,900, and US\$3,633 at most.

The counting center of Kunming Bus Group is located in an ordinary building. All of the bus currency counters are female. They all wear blue uniforms and count the small bills and coins under the surveillance of more than 10 security cameras.

Xiao Qiong comes to the counting center at about 8 a.m. She needs to put on her blue uniform before entering the office. She has to stick her fingers with adhesive plaster because sometimes hard paper cuts her fingers.

It takes less than one minute for her to count more than 60 one-yuan banknotes. "The biggest trouble is folded banknotes, because it takes so much time to open the folded banknote," said by Xiao Qiong.

These bus coin counters only rest half an hour at noon and they can only leave work after finishing the counting of the cash received from the previous day. Many of them suffer from occupational diseases, such as shoulder peri-arthritis, tendovaginitis and lumbar protrusion. According to Xiao Qiong, it is easier to get cramps in hands after coming back from holidays.

For final review, the bills and coins are handled automatically by machines. The machines can distinguish the money that can still be used from the money that should be destroyed automatically. Coins will be sent to an automatic coin sorter. The small bills and coins will be handed to People's Bank of China after final review by the bus counting center.

Sometimes, passengers may put their identification cards or other belongings into bus fare box by mistake. According to the head of the counting center, passengers can demand the bus team of the line to issue a certification and bring it to the counting center. The counting center can return the personal belonging to the passengers.

What is professionalism?

It is sometimes said there are only two professions, the law and medicine. By this people have meant that these two skills or arts require long study of the past corpus of knowledge, stiff professional exams, continuous professional development once qualified, and supervision by a professional regulatory body.

In practice today many other skills have come to be seen in the same light as these professions. Accountants, Investment experts, property specialists, opticians, architects, structural engineers and many others have a similar pattern to their lives. They too need to learn, pass exams and then accept some continuous professional training and supervision. You could widen the definition further to include gas heating engineers, plumbers and other important skilled trades where there is now a system of learning, exams, and regulatory expectations.

There is a general trend to add professions to the list under this definition, and to upgrade the level of qualifications people need to practice. Investment specialists now, for example, typically have a degree level qualification where a decade ago they may have held an A level equivalent, and thirty years ago may have been unqualified or have just passed the Stock Exchange exam.

There should, however, be something more to a profession than passing some exams and ticking boxes for the regulator as the individual seeks to keep up with any requirements for Continuous Professional development or regulatory checks on his or her actions. A true professional is someone who has genuine skill or knowledge that he or she takes pride in. They keep it up to date not because they have to but because it is part of being professional and doing the job well. A professional does not work a 9 to 5 day, but does the hours necessary to meet the demands of his patients or clients. If the person is employed they will be on a good salary and expected to work longer hours or at week-ends when needed. Military officers, for example, have to be available for duty as needed. Investment bankers pursuing deals may work all

week-end to see it through to time. A professional goes the extra distance, strives for continuous improvement, and upholds high standards of integrity and honesty. A bent lawyer or a dangerous doctor should be struck off.

Today there is a bit of reappraisal underway over these ideals or standards. At the same time as the Regulators and law makers trust the professionals less, there is a danger the professionals respond by being less professional in some ways. If the Regulator checks up on how much professional development someone undertakes, some so called professionals respond by gaming the Continuous Professional Development system. If the regulator sets minimum hours for such additional study there is the danger the minimum becomes the maximum. As the professional standards become more and more codified, so more and more professionals just implement the protocols or standards whether they are optimal or not, as it is the safe thing from the career point of view to do. It can cramp challenge and reform of the standards which may be needed for overall improvement. As the concept of work life balance becomes more entrenched, so more professionals want to go part time or limit their commitment to their discipline. How big a limit can you place on your profession before you are no longer sufficiently professional?

I would be interested in your thoughts. Do you think the tightening of requirements on professionals mean modern professionals are better than before these changes? Or are the professions becoming too bureaucratic, gripped by group think, to the detriment of their clients and patients?

[Chinese power plant becomes world's largest fossil fuel power plant](#)

Togtoh Power Plant in China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region officially became the world's largest operating fossil fuel power plant after two of its 660MW ultra-supercritical units were put into service, said China Datang Corporation, parent company of the power plant.

Currently, the plant has a total capacity of 6,720MW.

Located near a major coal field, the plant is able to convert about 17 million tons of coal into clean energy each year. The plant generated 339 billion kWh during 2016, or 30 percent of the total energy demand in Beijing.

Thanks to an increased focus on environmental protection, the company has successfully achieved ultra-low emissions. Ten of the plant's generating units had been denitrated by July 2014, cutting 40,200 tons of nitrogen dioxide emissions. In addition, the plant plans to perform denitration on 10 more units in the future.