

My Question during the Urgent Question on Lockdown: Economic Support, 3 November 2020

Sir John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): I am glad that the Government agree that where, by law, they stop people working and earning a living, they should compensate them.

Will the Government look again at the terms of the scheme for the self-employed—there are restrictions on several categories of self-employed who have no other means of earning their living and no large company support—and be more generous?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that we need all those self-employed people to be ready to return to work to get some kind of recovery going soon, because the economy is in deep trouble?

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr Steve Barclay): I agree with my right hon. Friend that we need to ensure that the economy is able to bounce back quickly. That is why we have provided over £13 billion of support to the self-employed, which by international comparisons—I know my right hon. Friend looks at international comparisons—he will see is extremely generous.

I have set out previously in the House part of the operational difficulties, for example with owner-directors in terms of what is dividend income and what is not.

The point is that we have set out a generous self-employment income support scheme, but we need to deliver that operationally in a way that meets the tests set by, for example, the Public Accounts Committee, which has asked whether we have the right level of controls in place, given the speed at which these schemes were deployed.