

Why pay the French to enforce their Laws?

I would have thought the French would want to stop the dangerous criminal boat businesses from their beaches. They act as a magnet meaning too many people congregate near the beaches and live rough close to their ports and seaside settlements. Do the people of France want these unhappy camps? Do they not have a better legal answer for the residents there? Are they happy with such settlements in their neighbourhoods?

It also means they fail to tackle obvious criminality by the boat organisers.

The criminals who run the boat services are doubtless breaking some or all of the following laws

- 1 Offering sea passages for fares without a licence
- 2 Overloading boats , risking the passengers
- 3 Using unsuitable boats for Channel conditions
4. Failing to keep a manifest of the passengers
5. Failing to declare revenue and profits to the tax authorities
- 6 Using the proceeds of crime
- 7 Aiding people seeking to break migration laws
- 8 Accepting passengers without a valid passport or travel document
- 9 Launching passenger boats and embarking passengers without a proper jetty or pier
- 10 Encouraging or assisting people into illegal work on arrival at destination.

They may well be committing even more serious crimes if they do lose passengers overboard or lose the boat, or if their activities spread into other illegal businesses.

It should not take UK encouragement and money to get these laws enforced. It should be possible for the French authorities to see these boats leaving with too many people on which they should intercept. Their intelligence services should be following the money and working out the big business gangs behind much of this. They could be mystery shoppers asking rates and times of crossings. They could be talking to people in the camps and woods by the sea about ways for them to get a better life legally.

The civil service and its role

When I was a Minister I stuck to the rules. Everything I did was done with officials present or seeing the papers. I always considered the official advice carefully. The relationship needed to be properly conducted, with the Minister handling any politics outside the Ministerial office and without the back up of the civil service. As a Minister you need to understand you have to govern in the interests of the whole country, should not offer favours to your own side, and often have to operate in a quasi judicial capacity. Ministers are above all beneath the law like everyone else. The privilege is you can change the law for the future.

You also need to understand you are on your own, you will take the blame for any mistake made in your department, whoever made it, and you cannot always rely on official advice. Whilst always saying please and thank you to your officials you should not always agree with their preferred consensus view. Often I would need to hold a review meeting for the advice sent, and encourage officials to recreate the proper arguments and choices they should have considered before they had reached a single consensus piece of advice. Sometimes my own experience and past knowledge inclined me to make a decision that was not the one recommended. Quite often it was better to choose a decisive option than a compromise one.

If you review civil service advice in an area you know well you can often see the problems with it. Officials change jobs far too often, limiting the amount they know about any specialist area. They often lack specialist expertise and write generalised advice or commentaries. Sometimes they draw on the work of outside bodies and companies to fill out their knowledge, which can introduce bias into the advice to a Minister. He is not made aware of where the information came from and why it was produced. The civil service needs to keep more people in worthwhile jobs for longer and back them up with more relevant training in the given area. I tested out advice by inviting in outside interests to tell me their views, knowing their bias but recognising their understanding of the affected area.

The civil service needs to rate administration as highly as policy advice. Arguing through a new policy and setting it out to Parliament is the starting point, not the final product. What matters is implementation. There needs to be more audit and analysis of how a launch of a new policy has gone, with a willingness to amend or remove if it miscarries.

The Hancock Whatsapp and message revelations reveal some unusual developments in Minister-official relations. I objected at the time to senior officials making presentations to the media and nation about the pandemic. That along with the underlying decisions is a Minister's job. Officials should concentrate on getting the data and advice right, and on implementing the decisions like the vaccine roll out and the need for extra hospital capacity.

Civil servants should not be judging which Ministers to do things or which Ministers to back. Ministers should have held officials accountable inside government for the poor data, the changes of base for the data and the failure of some officials to even follow their own lock down rules. Ministers of course needed good science, but they had to balance the uncertain early science about the pandemic with the impact on the economy and personal freedoms of some of the options.

Parliamentary sovereignty

Beneath the rows and disappointments over the small boats and the Northern Ireland Protocol lies one very simple point. Can UK voters tell their Parliament they want the boats stopped and NI/GB trade restored and expect to get their Parliament to do this? There are still so many voices and all the Opposition parties saying the UK Parliament is not sovereign. They use international Treaties, views of foreign countries, and judges to prevent government legislating the will of a majority of the people.

It was this frustration that led many to vote to end EU law and the role of the European Court of justice in our lives, so our Parliament could then act for the people. We are now told the Geneva Convention on refugees and the Human Rights Court prevent us stopping the boats. Meanwhile the EU seeks to interpret the Protocol in a way which imposes EU law and its Court on part of the UK again.

Parliament answers to the people. There are varying interpretations of treaty law. Countries change their minds about Treaties and some Treaties age badly. If the UK government wants to stop the boats it has to ask the UK Parliament to make clear its treatment of illegal migrants by sea is as set out in UK law regardless of Treaties. To take control of GB/NI trade and rules we need to see through the NI Protocol Bill, approved by large Commons majorities.

Sovereignty matters. We need to exercise it to solve these problems.

My Intervention in the SEND and Alternative Provision Debate

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con)

I warmly welcome more resource and better service in this crucial area. Where

new schools are being considered, will the Minister ensure that local MPs are properly consulted, because there will be a lot of local public interest in the location, the style of development and the impact on existing provision?

Claire Coutinho (Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing)

I thank my right hon. Friend for that question. Yes, I am happy to discuss with him the school—I think there might be two—coming forward in his area

[My Conservative Home article on the budget](#)

A picture of Nigel Lawson hangs in the study at 11 Downing Street. I was told Rishi Sunak asked for it to be placed there. I understand Jeremy Hunt approves. As both men admire Nigel, why are they so wedded to high and higher tax rates?

Nigel Lawson brought intellectual self confidence and energy to the task of being Chancellor. He fearlessly slashed income tax and corporation tax rates. Extra revenue poured in as growth improved. He was soon able to claim after large cuts that the rich were paying more tax, were paying more tax in real terms and were paying more income tax as a proportion of the total. What's not to like? Why not do the same again?

The Chancellor should see that charging people on £100,000 a year 60% on anything above £100,000, more than people on much higher incomes are charged above £125,000, makes no sense. It also annoys the doctors we want to keep here and working in the NHS. Get rid of that anomaly.

The Chancellor agrees we need more self employed. The loss of 700,000 since covid from self employment is bad news. It is partly caused by the 2021 tax changes. Reverse them. We need more plumbers, electricians, white van men and women to help look after our homes and businesses. It needs to be worthwhile to them. They do not want an IR 35 and VAT nightmare.

The Chancellor himself advocated a much lower corporation tax rate when he put together his leadership bid. It was right then and right now. Ireland shows us how well it works. They raise four times as much tax from business per head than we do because they have such an attractive low rate. Why insist on higher rates to collect less tax?

The problems seem to stem from OBR and Treasury forecasts and accounting. They do not allow enough for extra revenue from changed behaviour when tax rates are cut. They ignore the evidence from modern Ireland or from the UK under Lawson. To them a corporation tax rise delivers more revenue, yet it was Osborne's corporation tax cuts that delivered higher receipts. The Chancellor should cut the rates and explain why he thinks the OBR revenue forecasts are too low. He can always hike the tax rate again if there was an exception to the rule that lower rates give us more revenue.

The government wants more investment. The super deduction from corporation tax helped a bit but did not produce an Irish style business bonanza. They could keep the deduction for longer, but will also need lower rates.

Businesses model the cashflows over the life of an investment, not just the first couple of years when they are putting money in and benefitting from a tax offset then. A country with a low headline rate gets more investment enquiries. The UK is getting a bad reputation with a 31% hike in the Corporation tax rate planned, and with an avalanche of unpredictable windfall taxes. Getting oil and gas out of the North Sea instead of importing will lead to a 50% Corporation tax levy and a 35% windfall levy, making it one of the worst places to risk large sums for more energy. No wonder some good prospects are sitting under the sea with their owners unwilling to get into production anytime soon. We will collect less revenue because less oil and gas will be produced here by having such high tax rates. We will also lose out on all the high paid jobs and profits oil and gas activity bring. As this is to be a budget for growth the Chancellor should raise the threshold for business to register for VAT from the current £85,000 turnover. There are many businesses that turn work down to stay below the threshold and probably some that illegally do extra for cash to evade registration. A higher threshold would mean more work and profit to tax and more supply capacity in a world of shortages and high prices. Put it up to £250,000 and let small businesses expand.

It is no good saying this time they will stick up taxes and hope somehow the deficit comes down, with a view to tax cuts next year. Next year is too late for them to have a beneficial effect on the economy before the election, and too late to stave off the downturn this year. High taxes stop growth which makes deficit reduction more difficult. We need a growth budget now, with some Thatcher/Lawson verve. More revenue comes to those who cut tax rates. Bigger deficits come to those who frighten off business and slow an economy too much.

The Chancellor should beware that President Biden is splashing the cash big time on a series of incentives through tax breaks and subsidies to draw much investment into the USA. We need energy, semiconductor, transport, broadband and much other investment here in the UK. The big players are telling us they will get better terms and conditions in the USA. The UK should improve its pitch by easing the tax squeeze. Why not suspend VAT on home energy all the time prices are high, saving money on the subsidy bills? Why not set out the prices and conditions that will end the so called windfall taxes? If the government says they go on until 2028 whatever the gas or electricity price they are not windfall taxes, but general energy taxes that price domestic supply out of the market.

The Thatcher governments were great tax reformers. As the Chancellor gazes up at Nigel Lawson in search of inspiration he should remember this record. They took standard Income tax down from 33% to 25%, and the top rate of income tax down from 83% to 40%. They cut the corporation tax rate by a third and Inheritance tax down from a top rate of 75% to 40%. Nigel Lawson abolished the Investment Income surcharge, capital duty, National Insurance surcharge, development land tax and the tax on lifetime gifts.

Because of this the economy grew faster and more revenue came in. If our modern leaders truly revere Nigel Lawson they should start cutting tax rates.