[The Bank of England tightens money further]

Over a year ago the Bank of England decided to tighten money policy considerably. It removed all the special credit lines for commercial banks designed to encourage lending. It issued stricter guidance over car loans, mortgages and consumer credit. It went on to raise interest rates from 0.25% to 0.5%. It achieved its aim, with money growth halving to just 3.5% from the 7% level in 2016. The car market duly fell sharply, and the top end of the property market was damaged, primarily owing to tax rises, but assisted by the credit tightening. Money and credit still look too tight to provide the backdrop for decent expansion.

Yesterday they decided to go further, by increasing interest rates to 0.75% and introducing the concept of an Equilibrium rate of interest considerably higher than today's rate to guide markets towards expecting more monetary tightening. It is difficult to see why from the numbers being reported. Growth has slowed. There is no surge in inflationary pressures. Banks are better capitalised. On the Bank's own forecasts the UK economy grows more slowly than it used to with no inflationary problems ahead. They themselves concede that if they kept interest rates at the new level of 0.75% instead of raising them further prior to 2020, output would be higher, unemployment lower, and inflation only 0.2% higher than on their preferred course of slow growth and more tightening by that date.

The Equilibrium rate is an unhelpful abstraction or distraction from the day job of keeping inflation under control whilst promoting better growth. The Bank accepts that the so called Equilibrium rate "cannot be directly observed" – a polite way of saying it does not in any normal sense exist. They accept that "there is a wide degree of uncertainty around the estimated level" of the real equilibrium rate. By choosing a range of 0% to 1% real they are trying to get markets to accept more tightening, but then they back off a bit by leaving the timescale imprecise.

Inflation is being kept down by the open nature of the UK economy. A large inward migration is keeping wages down, whilst massive imports of goods and services are keeping general prices down. The Bank forecasts those features to continue. They are aided in this by internet competition, and by the emergence of big discounters in a range of markets. The Governor himself gave a good lecture some time ago which I commented on effectively debunking the main part of the MPC's analysis. Their theory is that they can measure capacity, and that we are now close to capacity. They therefore expect inflation to rise as we hit capacity. As the Governor pointed out, in an open global economy like the UK you can always import anything you need which domestic output cannot provide. So why is the MPC still preying in aid the idea that we will soon have exceeded capacity, and therefore need to be reined in? How do you measure capacity reliably these days, when the internet and changing consumer fashions and transforming what we need and the supply to meet demand? The Bank is doing us no favours by being too pessimistic about the outlook and then taking action to ensure a disappointing outcome.

What happened to the record temperature?

A week or two ago the media was full of stories of an exceptional heat wave that would take temperatures to new records. We were told that we should expect drought and intense heat. A few days on and temperatures slumped, with plenty of rain over the weekend. There has been little news reporting of the change of weather, and no pieces apologising for getting the forecasts wrong about new records by last week end. If as expected temperatures pick up again and there is no more rain we might hear about that.

I thought at the time of the forecasts that the weather was more like the weather in dry hot summers I remember in the past, so I looked up some of the figures. According to the Met Office 30 year numbers the average summer temperature has been 14.3 C and the average rainfall 241 mm. Every summer in the last ten years save 2013 has been wetter than the 30 year average, with 2011, 2012 and 2015 cooler than the average. 1976 was clearly much drier and hotter than recent years, as were some summers prior to that.

After the recent hot spell the highest temperature records for 1976, 42 years ago, remain intact. 2003 also recorded a high temperature for Faversham in 2003 which some say was slightly higher than 1976 for England.

Many things influence the weather, making it difficult to come up with a reliable model which accurately predicts what might happen next. Wind speed and direction changes, water vapour content in the air alters, cloud cover is very variable, solar activity alters in intensity, the jet stream moves around. Short term weather forecasting has got better because the experts have greater visibility of clouds on their way to us, and can calculate from wind speed and direction what is likely to happen. As any sailor can tell you, however, the wind is very variable minute by minute. altering the course and pace of clouds across our landscape. It is even more difficult making a long term forecast when the clouds which will dictate so much have yet to be formed.

[Project Fear from the EU is just absurd]

I guess much of the latest round of Project Fear, now in its extreme phase, comes from EU sources. They are clearly worried that we might just leave without making them a large payment and without staying in their system for another 21 months. They seem to be trying to shock UK public opinion into buyer's remorse on Brexit. Their efforts are silly.

Doubtless some of the most ardent Remain MPs and peers, many of them on the Opposition benches, seek to play up any negatives the EU might throw them as they seek to disrupt the country and its government over Brexit. The latest scare stories do not merit the attention they get in some newspapers and in some of the media. A cursory questioning of any of these stories would show it is without substance.

Let's take the latest scares that we will run out of drugs and food. How could that possibly happen? Continental suppliers want to sell us their goods after March 29th 2019, as they do now. The EU does not have the power to ban them selling to us. We will control all the ports for the receipt of these goods, so we will decide what checks and payments will be required. We can appoint whatever people and deploy whatever technology we want to ensure smooth running of the import process under WTO rules. Why would we want to introduce new checks and taxes that make it difficult to import things we want? I was glad to see that No 10 has at last briefed that there are no stand by plans for the army to move food, as food will of course continue to roll in on ships and trucks as it does today. Our non EU imports come in smoothly at the moment showing we know how to do it, even with tariffs where the EU requires them.

Or lets take the stupid idea that France and Germany will ground all their plans that currently fly to the UK in order to stop our planes flying to their airports. They are not going to want to cut themselves off from the UK market, from London and the large international hub at Heathrow, and their airlines will not want to have to cancel all the tickets they are selling for flights after March 29th 2019. The EU does not have the power to stop planes flying between member states. What would they say to the Spanish co owners of BA if they wanted to damage BA, the main UK airline? How would they put up a case in court when an airline sued them for attempted damage to its business?

Then there is the wrong notion that EU citizens living in the UK and UK citizens living in the EU would be at risk of removal. The UK has made clear it is not going to ask people legally settled here under EU rules to leave, and I expect the rest of the EU to behave in the same manner towards UK people living on the continent. Advanced democratic countries obey international law, which does not permit mass deportations. Nor I am glad to say have I ever heard a mainstream UK or EU politician advocate anything so unpleasant.

During the referendum campaign when I was speaking to a public meeting in my own area, the Remain spokesman was a civilised former senior civil servant. He delivered a mild version of Project Fear about the job losses, recession, falls in house prices and the rest that his side forecast for the winter immediately after the vote. We now know that was all wrong. The public reaction in a mixed audience was fascinating. They laughed at the silliness of Project Fear.

[Let’s spend the EU exit tax on ourselves instead – that’s a £39bn boost to us all]

Here’s a paradox. Ask the UK Treasury for money for schools or social care or defence and they say there isn’t any. Ask the Treasury for more money for the EU, and they say how much would the EU like?

Here’s a popular policy. The PM should tell the Treasury that the £39 billion they say we can afford to give to the EU should be spent at home instead. Let’s leave in March 2019 with no leaving present to Mr Juncker and his friends.

With £39bn to spend we could

Increase the NHS spend as planned – as long as we control what the money goes on and secure more quality and capacity with it

Sort out social care, offering £2bn a year more for that

Strengthen our armed forces

Increase schools spending

Give everyone a Brexit bonus by cutting Income Tax rates

Give business a boost by cutting business rates

Collect more revenue by cutting CGT and Stamp duty rates which are too high

The reason the UK economy is growing more slowly than the US is they have supportive tax cuts and spending boosts, and helpful authorities who are promoting growth.

I wonder why the Uk Treasury rejects that model? And why does it only have money for the EU, which we are meant to be leaving?

If we left on WTO terms we would also have the £13bn of new tariff revenue.

That should also be given back to us as tax cuts.

Spending the £39 bn at home means we can have tax cuts, domestic spending increases and less state borrowing. Why doesn't the Treasury demand this?

Going for faster growth – how the government can help

Growth mainly happens thanks to free enterprise and the opportunities of the market. Governments can help at the margin, and can hinder in so many ways if they follow anti enterprise policies.

I have been arguing in recent posts for two straightforward ways the government can help. It can spend more on items like transport capacity and education which make a direct contribution to a more productive economy. It can cut taxes that get in the way of enterprise and impede work.

In more detail, the government should take advantage of our exit from the EU to give UK competing businesses more scope to win government contracts. Strict application of EU procurement rules in the UK has meant the public sector buys many cars, machines and other supplies from continental producers. Who sees the French or German official buying a UK made car? A new Uk system should of course encourage competition to ensure innovation and keen prices for taxpayers, but it should also be friendly to competitive UK based businesses. We have started to demand more UK content in rail procurement for example, and have used the exemptions in the EU scheme to allow UK provision of much of our defence equipment in areas like naval vessels.

Intelligent buying by government can commission product for UK purposes that could also have an export benefit by selling the same or similar to overseas interests.

The UK needs to have a sensible approach to new borrowing. Borrowing huge sums for a large project like HS2 which is unlikely to generate revenues to service it is not sensible. Borrowing lesser sums at very low rates in the public sector today to build more cost effective road and rail capacity would be sensible. UK state debt is under good control when you adjust the totals for the £435 bn the UK state has bought in and owes to itself.

The best thing the government can do to promote growth is to cut tax rates on work and enterprise. The next thing it can do is to use the money it raises in taxes to employ people at home and provide services and incomes here instead of sending it to the EU.