

My Intervention in the Autumn Statement Resolutions (1)

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):

Noting the good words from the Chancellor in favour of self-employment, and noting the national insurance measures to help, are there things that the Department for Work and Pensions is doing, or can do, so that self-employment is an option for people who are currently without work but who may have a lot to offer?

Mel Stride:

My right hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the self-employed and to the national insurance changes that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced in his autumn statement. Of course, my Department does a huge amount to support the self-employed. Many of our programmes are open to self-employed people to ensure that we are there to support them with the wages that they are able to bring home in self-employment, and we will continue to do exactly that.

My Intervention in the Autumn Statement Resolutions (3)

John Redwood:

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the problem is that the OBR's forecasting never gives any credit for cutting a tax rate in order to get more revenue? This could be a good example of where that would work.

Mr Ellwood:

My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Centre for Economics and Business Research suggests that there is £10 billion to be made in lost GDP at the moment, as we are not attracting overseas visitors because our taxes are higher than those of our continental counterparts.

The Elgin marbles

The British Museum bought the marbles from Lord Elgin and is the custodian of them. They will need to make decisions about their future. The Prime Minister does not control the future of these statues.

When considering their future the Museum has researched how the marbles were obtained. Evidence suggests that Lord Elgin got the permission of the Turkish authorities who controlled Athens at the time to erect scaffolding and carefully remove some of the statues. The Parthenon was in serious decay and remained at risk. Some fragments were resting beneath the building where they had fallen off. It had suffered from Turkish and Venetian military activity. It would not have been possible to have spent all the time and trouble on removal, transport to the docks and loading onto a ship without the agreement of the authorities. Removing them helped ensure their preservation which was less assured given the negligence at the site. These were large heavy objects that needed careful handling and could not have been stolen or smuggled out.

Athens displays the marbles it owns in a museum and does not wish to put them back on the building. Athens has copies of the marbles that are held in the British Museum and other overseas displays as part of its display of what the frieze would have looked like. So to say it is like cutting up the Mona Lisa is not true. Half of the statues are permanently missing or destroyed from the local wars and lack of maintenance in the past. The other half including fragments are split between Athens, London, Paris, Copenhagen, Munich and Wurzburg . No-one thinks the full frieze exists, nor can it be restored to the building. The British Museum has made clear over the years that these sculptures are an important part of its world collection, properly come by. Athens rightly displays all it can close to the Parthenon along with copies to give visitors there an experience of what the Parthenon looked like before the wars and the lack of care gravely damaged it.

Department of Transport Answer to my Written Parliamentary Question on Road Maintenance

The Department for Transport has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (2439):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding his Department plans to provide to Wokingham Borough Council for (a) fixing potholes and (b) other road maintenance in the (i) 2023-24 and (ii) 2024-25 financial year. (2439)

Tabled on: 20 November 2023

Answer:

Guy Opperman:

The Department will provide Wokingham Borough Council with a total of £8.053 million for highways maintenance activities over the two years in question. The funding can be spent on activities including (a) fixing potholes and (b) other road maintenance in the (i) 2023-24 and (ii) 2024-25 financial years.

A Written Ministerial Statement has been laid in both Houses, and the Secretary of State has written out to Parliamentary colleagues advising them of the uplift to highways maintenance funding. In addition, officials from my Department will be writing out to all Chief Executives confirming their grant funding allocations shortly.

The answer was submitted on 28 Nov 2023 at 14:24.

[My Telegraph Article on growth](#)

I am publishing this today as it contains unfinished business on monetary and fiscal policy. It appeared in the Telegraph before the Autumn Statement. My schedule got too crowded to fit it in ahead of the Autumn Statement, but the issues deserve a further airing, particularly on bond sales and public spending.

The official advice in the run up to the Autumn Statement has been well leaked. It all seems designed to stop as many tax cuts as possible, at a time when the public and the Conservative Party are desperate to turn the tide of rising taxes and unleash some growth.

There is the doctrine of headroom. We are told based on OBR forecasts of deficits that are likely to prove as overstated as the past that there is little or no headroom for tax cuts. They never comment that there is no headroom for spending increases, which continue week after week with inflation of costs, plunging productivity and Ministerial announcements.

There is the doctrine that tax cuts cause inflation. Apparently from media accounts of this thinking a cut in Inheritance Tax is not inflationary because the money goes to someone rich enough not to need it or spend it. Any tax cut that goes to someone who does need it and spends it is automatically assumed to be inflationary. Then the same must be true of increases in

benefits. I think we can afford some better news for the many with tax cuts that help get inflation down

The official view is all very bad economics. Money and credit play an important part in inflation. The UK public sector refuses to apologise for an independent Bank creating huge quantities of money and the state borrowing large sums at near zero interest to spend. Surely these lie at the heart of the inflation we are living through. Japan and China facing the same price rises of energy and food on the back of the Ukraine war did not have the same inflation we and the EU had. Their Central banks did not step up the money printing and bond buying.

If the state borrows to spend more on services than it collects in taxes that is not necessarily inflationary. Borrowing the money to pay the bills takes that money away from the person or company that has the savings so they cannot spend it. It is if the banks are awash with Bank of England created money and then lend it out as they did for property and other asset purchases that you get inflation. They do not warn us that borrowing more money to spend on state services or benefits is inflationary yet that must be true if tax cuts are inflationary. The aim of state spending is to give employees and benefit recipients more money to spend.

What I want to see is the end to the aggressive selling of bonds by the Bank sending huge bills for the losses to the taxpayer. That drives rates including mortgage rates still higher and flattens the economy more. I want the bank to be able to cut rates a bit to price mortgages back for people who want to buy a home and to lend to companies that want to expand.

To do so we need lower inflation. So Chancellor, suspend VAT on domestic fuel. Cut fuel duty of petrol and diesel. Suspend carbon taxes on heavy energy using industries. These will directly cut the inflation rate. These are tax cuts to bring inflation down sooner and more.

As this happens so the Bank will be able to ease the squeeze. The Chancellor will have some flexibility even on pessimistic OBR numbers. He can add to this by selling all the shares in Nat West. He can delay some spending on carbon capture or turn to the private sector to finance it. He can pursue a drive to get the lost productivity back in the public services. A recent big fall has cost us around £30 bn extra for doing the same things.

He needs to boost output and capacity in the economy. More services and goods on offer will help bring inflation down. The quickest and cheapest way to do this is to lift the VAT threshold for small business. Many of them want to do more and have the ability to do so. They do not because they cannot face all the costs and compliance of registering for VAT.

He should reverse the changes to IR 35. This measure blocks self employed people from getting contracts from businesses nervous about being caught up in an argument with HMRC about the tax Status of their sub contractor. He could lower their National insurance as well to provide more incentive. We have lost almost 800,000 self employed since February 2020. We need to help them back. They would give us more supply, more flexibility, more choice.

Halving inflation this year is welcome but it is not job done. Key to growth and future prosperity is getting it down faster. Then we can have a better money and credit policy to boost jobs and growth. Tax cuts are essential to competitiveness, to promoting self employment and helping small business. Cheaper energy helps everyone, giving hope of a better Christmas with more to spend on good food and presents thanks to lower heating and driving bills. Growth brings more capacity and choice, removing inflation creating shortages

If only the government would break free from the gloomy advice and models at OBR and Bank which have given such wrong forecasts. If we set the same business tax rate as Ireland we would see our business revenues shoot up. Ireland gets four times as much business tax per head as we do by setting a much lower rate of tax.