Higher taxes do not bring down deficits or boost investment

The Chancellor should abandon Labour's idea of various windfall taxes. In the end consumers have to pay higher taxes levied on business. These extra taxes put inflation up, not down. The Chancellor should also abandon his proposal to hike corporation tax next year. All these extra taxes on business may poll well, but the slow growth or no growth, cancelled investment and lost jobs they will likely bring will not look so good to voters in the next election if he insists on damaging the economy Labour's way.

I read that he is pressing on with trying to construct a windfall levy on electricity companies. The ones that are closest to the consumer have already had their finances demolished by badly chosen price controls, with one of the biggest now a problem for the Treasury as it demands subsidies and sits there nationalised. He is finding that if we want to tax windfall profits by the power generators the ones that make the most are the renewable owners when the wind does blow and the sun does shine. Their generating costs have not shot up but their power prices have. The ones we rely on much of the time using gas to keep the lights on are not making much windfall profit as the cost of their gas is one of the main inflationary problems.

The Chancellor thinks if he offers businesses tax breaks when they make a new investment they will carry on happily under his high and unpredictable business tax regime. Why? An investor looks at the lifetime cashflows and tax burden, not just at the first couple of years when you are putting in the buildings and equipment. They all look a lot worse with the higher taxes the Chancellor has in mind.

The nation's journey 1952-2022

The Jubilee is a time to look back and to recognise our own personal journeys and how they are interwoven with the evolving life of the nation. Like most people I have never know another monarch. Queen Elizabeth has always been there. Her accent, way of doing the job and attitudes have evolved as the nation has changed.The nation expects complete political neutrality, visibility, but a little reserve and mystery.

I remember as a young child asking my parents to explain the rubble and overgrown weeds of a bomb site that still survived in my home city of Canterbury. We had a new shopping centre that had emerged from the rubble. I had never asked why the shopping centre was new. It never occurred to my child mind it could have been blown up by enemies. Beyond the city walls there was still a little lingering evidence of war that I had not understood.

I remember the sense of shock I felt when my parents gave me a sanitised short simplified explanation of bombing. My naivety that adults were protective of children was dented by this new information as I saw it meant everyone had been bombed.

As the war receded in the rear view mirror prosperity spread more widely through the country as we picked the fruits of peace. The 1960s and 1980s for all their struggles were years of great progress in advancing a consumer revolution. The revelation of the Mini brought small cars to many more families. The mass production of affordable fridges, washing machines and driers greatly improved meal preparation and transformed washday. Cheaper package holidays allowed many more to go abroad for sun and sights. Central heating delivered new standards of winter comfort banishing the frozen windows and cold bedrooms. Tvs made their way into most homes and were adapted to coloured photography. Later the ubiquitous home computers and mobile phones morphed us into a digital age, providing us each with computing power that the state alone had developed and owned to help win the world war.

I remember as a young child having to visit an ageing old man. He lived in a Victorian terrace house which was little changed from how it must have been all those years before when first constructed. The house was still lit by gas lamps. The water for the tea slow boiled on a coal fired range. Just the one room was properly heated by the coal burner. The front room was forbidden territory only used for funerals or other unexplained and infrequent important functions. I was not allowed in it. We were entertained in the all purpose back dark living room . There was a large general purpose table and hard chairs to sit on. Like all adult chairs I had to mountaineer to get on one. As an only child in a world of adults I got used to living in rooms furnished for giants. There were heavy brocade cloths and house plants as decoration. I was delighted when we returned home to a more modern world. Much has got a lot better over the last seventy years.

When I talk to my young grandsons I think how the generations can stretch understandings of time. I can try to tell them what the world must have been like in the early twentieth century from relatives who told me and they may in due course be able to look back from the early years of the twenty second century on how we live now.If a new generation will stand on the shoulders of an older generation it will see further and understand more.

The monarch provides such a living thread through our national story. Monarchs no longer make the laws, impose the taxes or spend the public money, but they are in regular contact with those who do. They are part of the public memory of things in history, part of the continuities of national life. The street parties taking place are very similar to those of long gone royal events in centuries past. The royal family itself has within it the tragedies, conflicts and disasters that befall others played out for all to see. It reminds us regularly of the strength of some family ties and the problems they can bring as the royal family has its share of divorces, family feuds, and inappropriate behaviours.

The UK gave away an empire but does not lack a role

One of the more absurd common truths is the one that says the Uk lost an empire and now lacks a role. It is allied to the dangerous notion that the UK has to place itself under EU or US control to be a main player or to “have influence”.

The UK rightly gave away the empire. It had no wish to hang on to it after 1945, fighting battles against independence movements in the way some did. Nor does it lack influence or a role. As the world’s fifth largest economy with one of the most powerful militaries after the big two of the USA and China, the UK has a seat on the UN Security Council, and is an important voice again in a range of world bodies from the World Trade Organisation to the environmental conferences to the World Health organisation. When the UK has world class research and confidence in its own views and beliefs it can achieve a great deal through its soft power. As a leading member of NATO it belongs to the world’s most powerful military organisation, where it can bring force to bear with allies for a good cause if it agrees to do so. The UK has in recent decades a good record at protecting or liberating smaller countries from bullying invasions. Alone we evicted Argentina from the Falklands, and led by our US allies we freed Kuwait.

From my study of English and UK history our past underlines the kind of people we are and the role in the world that we wish to define and refine. We have always looked outwards, favouring free trade with as many parts of the world as will reciprocate. We have been on a long march to representative democracy, and have always been hungry for liberty. There are strong strands of anticlericalism in our roots that manifest today as sensible scepticism about some of the fashionable nostra of world tyrants and global bureaucracies. There is in us that respect for the rule of law and the form of the constitutions, tempered by a tough strain of protest if our liberties are too pinched by authority or if the rules are bent too far by government. Failure to understand that lost a King his head, cost later sovereigns power, and lost some Prime Ministers their jobs. It led us to Brexit when the public told their elites that they were promised a common market and ended up with a powerful international body making many of our laws and deciding some of our taxes.

Slow to anger as a democratic people, preferring the paths of peace, we as a nation fight doggedly and accept sacrifice if an aggressive autocrat seeks to take over independent countries. In the sixteenth century England and Wales stood almost alone against the might of superpower Spain, helping the Netherlands in revolt against Spanish autocracy. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Great Britain organised Europe against the French superpower’s attempts to take over much of the continent by conquest. In the

twentieth century twice we had to fight against German aggression and German attempts to create a united Europe against the will and freedoms of many of Europe's countries.

It would be good if we can now avoid damaging European entanglements as we wish the EU success in creating a peaceful resolution of the various tensions and disputes between continental countries. There is no need for us to lead the questions of how the EU defines and defends its eastern borders. The USA and ourselves in NATO need to define limits to those who would threaten us through eastern Europe but should not get involved in the Balkans and former Soviet Union issues which currently preoccupy the EU. We may independently decide to help a country in distress from Russian invasion as we do with Ukraine.

One of the worst features of the governing elite in my lifetime has been the pessimism and lack of belief in our abilities as a country to influence the world for good and to prosper without being controlled by a larger power from outside. This has been allied to their dreadful run of boom/bust and austerity advice since the early 1970s, leading to an underperformance of our economy. Their poor economic policy feeds their wish to impose greater international strictures and controls on us. Why do they forget this is the country that not so long ago designed the first large working computer to break codes, developed the jet engine, built the world's first civil nuclear power plant and with France produced the only supersonic passenger aircraft? The UK can achieve a lot, and would achieve a lot more if more of its governing elite had confidence in us.

The place of Queens in history

The British monarchy got the idea of using female talent much sooner than many other institutions in our country. In the last 500 years we have been ruled by Queens for 202 years or 40% of the time. This includes the second Mary ruling jointly with husband William, as their tenure was based on her prime claim to the throne . Queens have not proved very different to their male counterparts in the way they have done the job. We have seen one woman try to usurp the throne in 1554, with various men also trying something similar. In the era of executive monarchs Queens like their male counterparts used executions to deal with rivals and threats. Queen Mary I earned herself the title of Bloody Mary for executing Protestant dissenters from her Catholicism, burning many at the stake including a former Archbishop of Canterbury and a Bishop of Gloucester.

Three women share three of the top four slots for longest reigns, showing their political skills as well as their good health. Of the men only George III had a reign of 60 years , in third place after Elizabeth II's 70 years so far and Victoria's 64 years, though his reign was troubled by mental

illness and entailed a Regency for part of it. Elizabeth I managed to survive and flourish for 45 years on the throne despite many attempts to assassinate her. She also successfully confronted a major planned Spanish invasion to remove her from office by foreign force when Spain was the contemporary superpower seeking to unite Europe on Spanish terms. She faced enemies at home plotting with enemies abroad to kill her and change the government. No other King managed more than 40 years. Charles I was executed after fighting a civil war against Parliament. James II was removed from office in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Edward VIII abdicated over a dispute with Parliament about his marriage.

Elizabeth II's success in gradually modernising the monarchy whilst staying very popular for most of the time rests on one simple foundation. She has avoided expressing political views and has not tried to interfere with what her governments have been wishing to do. Her son needs to grasp the crucial importance of this before he in due course takes the throne. Pursuing contentious causes does not mix with neutral monarchy.

Today there is a small minority of republicans who want the institution abolished and who will not be celebrating the Platinum landmark. Most people from Mirror readers to Express fans, from Brexiteers to Remain supporters will celebrate the anniversary in some way or will look in on the national events of the four days on their televisions with a friendly eye. That is in itself the one tribute to the Queen that matters. 70 years on, in a world of Republics and with a global enthusiasm for greater equalities this monarchy is still relevant.

The Queen has carved out an important role as the UK's first diplomat. On the whole successive governments have used her wisely in that role, as she has been the uniting figure for the nation that foreign heads of government and of state can relate to whatever their politics. Some foreign leaders might not have wanted a photo op with some of our Prime Ministers owing to big political divides, but all seem to want the photo with The Queen, a person known worldwide for her decades of meeting and greeting.

One of the advantages the UK has in the world of international diplomacy is the monarchy. Heads of State visiting here get something different from the five star hotel and luxury limo experience. They may dine in a castle, ride in an open carriage and meet a Queen they have no political issues with who is an internationally recognised global celebrity.

Jackdaw field gets the go ahead

Sometimes sensible proposals get through. This will bring more tax revenue, more jobs, and less CO2.