Project Fear takes another hit – employment and wages carry on rising

The latest employment figures are good. Unemployment has fallen to 4%, with strong jobs growth continuing. Vacancies are also at good levels, implying no immediate fall off in employment in prospect. Average earnings hit £27,500 a year as we go into 2019, with real wages now growing at around a 1% annual rate.

This means over the two and a half years since we voted to leave, the economy has continued to generate a lot of extra jobs, bringing unemployment down. Most of these jobs are full time, and many are well paid, boosting average earnings. That is the opposite of the recession allied to big job losses we were told by the Treasury and Remain experts to expect after the referendum decision.

Many in Parliament wish to increase the uncertainties and carry on portraying a gloomy outlook from their own pessimistic imaginations. Many of them now are desperately searching for a delay to Brexit so they can prolong the uncertainty and spend many more months rowing over what kind of Brexit they want or will allow, regardless of the views of the voters and regardless of what the EU might agree to. It is particularly cheering that employment has grown so well recently, when the national conversation has been dominated by gloomy Remain MPs telling us the future is dreadful, and when the chances of us just leaving without signing the Withdrawal Agreement have risen thanks to the huge defeat of the Agreement in the Commons.

It also shows that the authorities attempts to slow and damage the economy with a series of tax attacks on homes and cars, and with the slowing of credit, have not been sufficient to stop overall jobs and wage growth, though they have of course done damage to the targeted sectors.

My letter to the Post Office Ltd regarding their proposal to move the Wokingham Post Office to commercial premises

I have written to the Post Office regarding their proposal to move the Wokingham Post Office to commercial premises citing my reservations about the move. They are currently running a consultation and I would encourage residents to contribute to the consultation to make their views known. You can find the consultation at: https://www.postofficeviews.co.uk/national-consultation-team/wokingham-rg40-1aa-008939/.

I, along with Wokingham Councillors, will be meeting with Mr Gale next month.

THE RT HON JOHN REDWOOD MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Roger Gale
Network & Sales Director
Post Office Limited
Finsbury Dials
20 Finsbury Street
London
EC2Y 9AQ

17 January 2019

Dear Mr Gale

Thank you for your letter concerning the Post Office in Wokingham. You do not explain why you think there needs to be a new retail partner and why these important local services have to be absorbed into a different kind of shop. People are used to the range of services the Post Office offers, and to the location of their main Post Office on Broad Street. It would be possible to improve the internal configuration of this property, by adding more counters and using the full width of the building for customer service. It also has the advantage of keeping collection of undelivered items in the same location as an important part of the modern postal service.

As you should know the Wokingham area is expanding rapidly with the construction of new homes. The current counters of the Post Office are insufficient often leading to delays and queues. Cutting back to just three positions at the rear of the WH Smith store is going to make this problem worse, when you should be planning for expansion.

Placing the Post office at the back of the WH Smith store makes it more difficult for people to get access, requiring them to get past shoppers browsing between the Smith displays and avoiding the till queues which are also a feature of WH Smith at busy times of day. It will be particularly difficult for people with pushchairs, wheelchairs and walking frames. The only gain for customers is the longer week-end opening hours which could be accommodated at your existing premises.

Yours sincerely

Email: john.redwood.mp@parliament.uk Tel: 020 7219 4205

The revolt of the motorists

The French gilets jaune movement has in part been a protest against the attempts of the elite to limit people's uses of cars and vans. The movement began with demands to cut the taxes on petrol and diesel, and to resist more moves to make motoring ever dearer. Some of the protesters then went on to damage or obscure the cameras checking car speeds on French highways, rapidly taking a majority of them out of use.

The car to many is not merely an important symbol of personal freedom, but a vital means of getting to work, going to the shops, taking children to school and enjoying leisure time away from home. Many people want to learn to drive and acquire a car as soon as they are able, recognising how much more scope they will have to do as they wish in their lives if they have their own transport. The establishments of Europe see the car instead as an enemy of their vision of the future. They impose high taxes to reduce use of vehicles and to price people on lower incomes off the road altogether. They impose tougher regulations to limit the use of certain vehicles in certain places and at certain times. They are now threatening the whole car park of diesel and petrol cars, wanting to push people into owning an electric vehicle or giving up on personal transport altogether. They seem to think people can and should take the bus or train even when they live in rural areas with little or no access to such services.

Of course governments need to impose some rules on car drivers to ensure safer roads. It is sensible to have a testing regime for drivers and vehicles, and sensible to have road markings and road rules to avoid collisions. No-one disagrees with good measures to keep us safe. The problem comes when the rules and requirements multiply to the point where they can be a distraction or a problem for the safe driver, and where the whole exercise is one large attempt to take more money off the motorist with tax placed on tax to drive, own, buy and operate a vehicle.

The intervention in the market by the EU and member state governments to get more people to buy diesel cars worked well, only for the EU then to change its mind and tell us we had been wrong to follow their advice. Now they wish us to believe that if we take on an electric car we will in future be subsidised or taxed a lot less. People are very sceptical, fearing that if electric cars become popular then the subsidies will end and new taxes will be imposed as governments will want to replace the huge lost revenue from taxes on diesel and petrol. They also worry lest some unseen environmental problem with batteries emerges as emission issues arose late in the day with diesels.

In this vexed area of policy the car and van using public see hypocrisy from those who govern them. They seem to have plenty of access to prestigious cars without a thought for the cost as they are provided by the state. If cars are good enough for Mr Macron to get around in, aren't they also necessary for French men and women as they go about their work?

[67 days to Independence Day]

Let's countdown to Independence and get ready to celebrate our exit.

There are only 36 days left when Parliament is in session and able to try to mess up or delay our passage to Independence.

Write to your MP today if they are showing signs of wanting to stop Brexit and remind them of their Manifesto promises and the result of the referendum and General Election.

The government should be discussing how we commemorate one of the great days of UK history, the day we restore an independent self governing democracy to these islands.

The government should also be publishing our tariff schedule, getting its Brexit bonus budget ready for March, taking back control of our fishing grounds and setting out a food and farming policy that is good for the UK.

When we joined the EEC there were commemorative stamps and coins. There were more coins for the 25th anniversary of our membership. What should we do for March 29 2019?

[Getting growth back worldwide]

Whilst the UK has been preoccupied by Brexit a far more important struggle for our prosperity has been going on globally about growth in the world economy. Markets have been signalling that Central banks are tightening money too much, and governments are still too wedded to austerity outside the USA.

The Euro economy has suffered most, with German national income and output falling in the third quarter of 2018 and still weak in the fourth quarter. Car output in particular has been hit by the Chinese slowdown, by regulatory change from the EU and by the pace of technical and regulatory change workdwide. The UK economy has performed better despite both a monetary and fiscal tightening last year of some severity.

The world's two giant economies, USA and China, have both followed tight money policies which have slowed them down. Interest rate sensitive areas like homes and cars have seen sales hit by dearer and scarcer credit.The Chinese stock market fell to half its elevated high of 2016, and Wall Street had a sharp sell off in November and December. It now looks as if both these leading economies will abate the severity a bit, which is necessary to sustain growth. China has announced lower reserve ratio requirements for banks, and the Fed has backed off full support for a more aggressve set of rate rises in 2019.

The Eurozone will have to announce no rate rises for the foreseeable future and no move to Quantitative tightening if it wants to avoid recession. It may end up allowing a little bit of fiscal relaxation as France struggles to respond to the gilet jaunes and as Italy’s government insists on just a little less austerity. The problem is that without proper transfers within the Eurozone from taxpayers in rich countries to the poor in lower income countries they do need to keep up a stricter discipline. This bites more on the poorer areas in the zone, causing political tension and fuelling populist movements.With the AFD doing better in polls, the German government will need to get even tougher about budget controls on weaker Eurozone members, and reaffirm a no new grants or bail outs policy.

There is no great inflation problem the Central banks need to pre empt or control. There is a shortage of demand and slow real wage growth which sensible economic policies need to combat. The UK economy needs the £ 39 bn to spend over the next two years on a mixture of public service improvements and real wage boosting tax cuts.

There does need to be a better policy response in the UK to the collapse of car sales. The UK has made the general global situation worse at home by its big hike in Vehicle Excise duties and the uncertainty over future tax and regulatory policy towards diesels. With so much change in the air over future engine styles, autonomous vehicles and extent of urban controls over cars the traditional car makers are struggling. On both sides of the Atlantic monetary policy is also affecting the price and availability of car purchase loans.