

Letters to the Editor



GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

Email: letters@independent.co.uk
 Post: Letters to the Editor,
 The Independent, 2 Derry Street,
 London, W8 5HF
 Please include your address
 and daytime phone number.
 Letters may be edited.

Follow us on Twitter
 @independent
 Like or comment on Facebook

Corbyn, the enemy, or champion, of democracy

I did not vote for Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader, but I admire his principled stance on a number of issues. I am, however, very disturbed by your reports that he wishes to change the rules to ensure that the incumbent Labour leader can stand for re-election without the support of even a minimal number of MPs. The United Kingdom is a parliamentary democracy

and we elect representatives to act on our behalf. It is wrong for a party leader to be nominated without at least some support from those representatives. Democracy is not a perfect system, but the move of power from MPs, voted on by all of the people, to party members and supporters, just a small minority of the electorate, would be a retrograde step.

Jeremy Corbyn needs to trust all of the people, not just his party supporters. After all, he will need the support of a wider franchise to return the Labour Party to power.
Pete Rowberry
Saxmundham, Suffolk

It would seem that Lord Kinnock and a fair number of Labour MPs are in denial. How many times

does it need to be pointed out to them that Jeremy Corbyn was voted into the leadership role by a massive majority of grass-roots Labour Party members and supporters?
 I would think that as they are the elected representatives of the people in a democracy they would be able to grasp the fact that Jeremy was voted into office through

a thoroughly democratic process.

As I see it, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, with its proposal, is merely trying to ensure that Corbyn is not ousted by group of right-leaning Labour MPs who are out of step with the vast majority of their constituency members.
David Felton
Crewe

WHY PRISON NUMBERS MUST BE REDUCED
 The absurdity of Britain's high prison population looks set to deepen (editorial, 9 March). The Ministry of Justice is projecting ongoing growth in numbers through to 2021.

There are a number of good reasons for reducing Britain's bloated prison population. Doing so to improve the rehabilitation prospects of those who remain locked up is one of the less persuasive ones. The alternative of recruiting more staff to improve the ratio of staff to prisoners is a counsel of despair that will only justify further prison growth.

The notion that prisons can be places of rehabilitation, if only the "right" number of people are imprisoned, or the "right" staffing ratios are in place, is a peculiarly persistent mantra with little by the way of credible evidence in its favour. Michael Gove is right to reject claims that rehabilitation will only be possible when the numbers in prison are reduced. But only because it is a fantasy to think that prisons can be meaningful places of reform and rehabilitation.

Prisons are harmful places of despair and misery, for male and female prisoners. They are harmful places too for prison officers, who experience higher levels of stress, and earlier deaths, than those in comparable professions.

The starting point of any coherent approach to our prisons is a clear commitment to end the unnecessary imprisonment of tens of thousands of fellow citizens. Ministers may not like this message.

They should continue to hear it.
Richard Garside
Director, Centre for Crime and Justice Studies
London SW8

BREXITERS MUZZLE EXPERT OPINION
 The Governor of the Bank of England was bitterly criticised by Brexiters after he delivered a warning that leaving the EU is the "biggest domestic risk" Britain faces. Giving evidence to MPs, Mark Carney said it could trigger a prolonged period of financial instability, with serious consequences for both the housing market and the City of London.

As in the Scottish referendum, it is becoming increasingly difficult for ordinary voters to get expert information, as even moderate comments are rejected as part of "Project Fear". But we may recall Alex Salmond, a former "oil economist", rubbishing Sir Ian Wood's reservations about North Sea oil – reservations which in the event proved overly cautious.
Dr John Cameron
St Andrews

The Brexit campaign tries to blame Europe for the loss of our sovereignty – but isn't this to misplace the source of the loss?

MPs feel they have no power and we blame them for being useless. National governments globally are losing power to international corporations and financial institutions. If we leave the European Community we will be pushed closer towards America to whom we first lost our sovereignty – a

nation that knows no limit to its bullying imperialism.

The European Union attempts to be a democratic grouping of nations in which we have a high place of influence. Where else would you want to be?
Roger Coward
Llandrindod Wells, Powys

Has any one considered that 39 million UK passports will become invalid on the day we leave the EU? Could lead to queues at the passport office.

Has anyone considered that our European Health Insurance Cards (EHIC) will become invalid? Best not fall ill or break your leg in France.

These are just two of the hundreds of consequences of exit ignored by the "Brexit" rhetoric. Stay united.

Martin Deighton
Wickham Market, Suffolk

For those in the "stay in" camp of the EU debate who cite Churchill as a mover for the EU, this is what Churchill actually said in the House of Commons on 11 May 1953:

"We have our own dream and our own task. We are with Europe but not of it. We are linked but not combined. We are interested and associated but not absorbed. If Britain must choose between Europe and the open sea, she must always choose the open sea."
Dr David Hill
Huddersfield

After another week of media focus on two sets of men in grey suits behaving like pantomime characters – Oh yes we'd be better off in the EU – Oh no we wouldn't – isn't it about time we

heard from the other 50 per cent of the population?
Philip Turtle
Stockport

EATING MEAT IS BAD FOR THE PLANET
 Steve Connor's coverage of the Nasa study ("Food production cut by warm-weather farming", 8 March) concludes that increased temperatures could have a devastating impact on access to food. But it goes further than this: the way that individuals respond to climate change could lead to huge, hitherto unanticipated cuts to food availability. These could also kick in when global temperatures increase by just a single degree – far sooner than many realise.

With livestock farming accounting for more carbon emissions than all forms of transport combined, reducing meat consumption alone could get us 25 per cent of the way towards limiting global temperature rises to under 1.5 degrees.

The question seems to be: why is this not convincing enough for us to choose more sustainable, healthier diets involving smaller amounts of meat? Right now we still have the choice – but climatic change might take such decisions out of our hands far sooner than we dare think.

Kierra Box
Friends of the Earth
London SW9

TURKEY GETS A GREAT DEAL FROM THE EU
 Three billion euros not to wave Syrian refugees through to the EU? Tick. Visa-free travel to the EU four months earlier than planned? Tick. Acceleration

of EU accession talks? Tick. And all of this conceded to a country that has just tightened its grip on press freedom and was ranked joint 66th in Transparency International's 2015 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Republic of Turkey's founder, pronounced: "How happy is the one who says: I am Turkish." David Cameron might be forgiven for wishing that his renegotiation of the UK's relationship with the EU had been as productive, and for being all the more bemused that it wasn't.
Jeremy Redman
London SE6

WHY WE DON'T NEED CARRIER BAGS ANY MORE
 The reason carrier bag use has fallen (Ben Chu, 7 March) is simple. We wanted the free bags so that we would not have to buy bin bags, freezer bags etc. Now we have to pay 5p for a carrier bag we might as well buy for about the same cost the purpose-made and better bags.
Dorothy Hickman
Redhill, Surrey

WESTWARD HO!
 HO! HO!
 John Sculpher has got it wrong (Letters, 9 March) with his grandson. It's either "We are taking him to Westward Ho!" or "We are taking him to Westward Ho!" The exclamation mark on "Ho!" in the village's name serves no punctuational purpose. A sentence must end with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark!
John Polley
Ludlow, Shropshire

It is a fantasy to think that prisons can be meaningful places of reform and rehabilitation