

Letters to the Editor



Letters to the Editor should be sent to letters@thetimes.co.uk or by post to 1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF



Press arbitration

Sir, In the debate on press regulation, it has been suggested that there is not an affordable way for the public to bring legal claims against national newspapers. May I, as the debate spins on, make the revolutionary plea that it be conducted on the basis of fact?

IPSO has launched a pilot of just such a scheme of arbitration: it is available as a low-cost alternative to court. Claimants can already seek low-cost resolution to legal claims against titles published by all of IPSO's national members, including the publishers of the *Daily Mail*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and this newspaper.

Damian Collins MP said that those who have a case but cannot afford expensive lawyers should have somewhere to turn to. They can turn to IPSO. Its scheme provides access to highly respected QCs, such as Heather Rogers and Adrienne Page, who can act as arbitrators and rebalance any inequality of power between the parties. This is provided at a fraction of the cost of an average court case.

We have also structured the scheme to provide an incentive to early settlement to encourage swift resolution of claims and limit legal costs. For a flat fee of £300, claimants can obtain binding rulings on specific legal issues early in the process. These rulings can indicate the likely success of a claim and provide a strong basis from which to achieve an appropriate settlement.

Only if the claim cannot be resolved on the basis of this early ruling will the claimant be asked to begin paying towards the arbitrator's fees. These fees are capped and can be automatically recovered from the publisher should the claim be successful.

IPSO arbitration gives individuals the chance to find resolution where they might otherwise be denied justice, and is the only truly viable means of assessing press arbitration. SIR ALAN MOSES
Chairman, IPSO

Corrections and clarifications

● Contrary to our report, "Harry Potter and the resurgence of printed books" (News, Jan 6), J K Rowling's screenplay for *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* and Rowling and Jack Thorne's script for *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* are both published in eBook form.

● Burberry is to update the stock market on its trading on Wednesday Jan 18, not Thursday Jan 12 as we said in *The Week Ahead* (Business, Jan 9).

● A "news in brief" report (Jan 7) suggested that Ofsted was responsible for "outstanding" schools being exempt from inspections. The statutory exemption was introduced in the Education Act 2011.

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Drunk tanks, A&E and out-of-hours care

Sir, One issue that does not help emergency departments is the rise in the number of patient referrals at weekends (report and letters, Jan 10). So-called SitRep data published by NHS England shows that the number of patients referred to A&E at weekends by NHS III rises by about 40 per cent per day compared with those referred each weekday. This is because the availability of other NHS services reduces at weekends.

This phenomenon is in addition to those patients to whom NHS III dispatches ambulances; many of these patients will then be brought to A&E. At weekends ambulance dispatches by NHS III also increase.

Efforts to increase primary care cover (particularly GP out-of-hours services and dentistry) at weekends, and reduce alcohol consumption in the general population, could alleviate this pressure.

GORDON MILES
CEO, Royal College of Emergency Medicine

Sir, The reason why an increasing number of patients with non-serious "emergency" health issues are turning up at the A&E is because they are finding it increasingly difficult to gain quick access to a GP. The Tony Blair administration is partially responsible for this state of affairs: GPs were allowed to withdraw from providing cover outside normal working hours and received a substantial salary increase for the inconvenience.

Surely the way forward is to require

GPs to reinstate comprehensive coverage 24/7 and for the NHS to provide more drop-in centres for non-serious "emergencies". If these were located near A&E departments, patients with non-emergency conditions could be directed to them.

ALEXANDER JOHNSTON
Syston, Leics

Sir, That a GP receptionist laughs when Janice Turner (Jan 7) seeks medical attention for her 93-year-old mother who is not too well tells us how dysfunctional general practice has become in this country. In every other advanced country, it is the patient who decides when they need care.

The practice at which I am a patient devotes one eighth of its doctors' time to acute care. Neither my wife nor myself, both nearly in our eighties, have been able to get to see GP in the past year when we needed urgent attention; we had to resort to A&E for medical care.

Every person in this country regardless of where they are should be able to see a doctor within a reasonable time when ill. As a retired doctor I know that this has nothing to do with availability of a doctor but with a perverse system that mitigates against the wellbeing of its customers. DR SURINDER SINGH BAKHSHI
Hansdworth Wood, Birmingham

Sir, As a very junior A&E doctor years ago, I was instructed that drunks rarely required the benefit of anaesthesia for management of

simple fractures, dislocations and minor surgery. Further, that the mutually co-operative relationship with the local police station enabled immediate transfer of disorderly drunks without life threatening problems to a police cell. This approach seemed to have little deterrent effect on the often repeated attendance of our local drunks but at least they were quickly dealt with and caused minimal disruption to the management of other patients.

ADAM LEWIS
Radlett, Herts

Sir, On my first day as a newly qualified doctor, at Bart's on January 2, 1967, a letter to *The Times* remarked: "Much of the strain at Christmas is man-made. On Christmas Eve, between 9pm and 9am, 24 out of 44 new patients coming to the reception department [A&E] were drunk... They naturally delayed the treatment of those injured from other causes."

Today there are fewer A&E departments, so the numbers are greater, and the inebriation is frequently exacerbated by drug use.

"Drunk tanks" as proposed by Professor Shepherd (letter, Jan 10) have been shown to be effective: I supervised one at the three-day Reading Rock Festival for 20 years and it was completely safe and cost-effective. They could be introduced in all areas where there is a problem.

DR ALAN BAILEY, FRCP
Canterbury

Effects of vaping

Sir, Professor Hajek's claim (letter, Jan 7) that a recent research study is "anti-vaping" propaganda is unsubstantiated, as the researchers reportedly and reasonably claimed that "vaping is less harmful than conventional cigarettes, but nonetheless they are not without their harmful effects". The 2015 Public Health England report on e-cigarettes, to which Professor Hajek was a co-author, was also not peer-reviewed, and expert toxicologists have voiced significant reservations over the claims it made related to e-cigarette safety. Professor Hajek further appears to ignore that his own National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training Guidance for

E-cigarettes has already warned about an identified toxic potential from cinnamon-flavoured e-liquid, and states that "they should be avoided".

DAVID BAREHAM
Specialist respiratory physiotherapist, Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust

'Misleading' GDP

Sir, Further to your headline "Britain has world's top economy" (Jan 6), it is true that under a single, widely quoted, economic indicator (growth in GDP) Britain's economy appears to be putting in a strong performance. But politicians and many economists are reluctant to admit that a fair portion of GDP growth is simply due

to the rise in the working population (mostly arising from the growth in the number of immigrants) which of itself generates greater economic activity.

Using numerous other economic indicators, Britain's performance ranges from sluggish to downright abysmal. Politicians typically ignore the many flat-lining indicators such as GDP per person, productivity, average earnings or household incomes. They avoid mentioning the minimal progress in rebalancing the economy, the continuing high levels of the deficit, the increasing levels of household debt, the declining level of household savings, or the worrying state of the current account. Growth in overall GDP is a rather simplistic parameter.

ALEXANDER BREGMAN
London W13

1914 THE FIRST WORLD WAR 1918

ON THIS DAY JANUARY 11, 1917

DEATH OF "BUFFALO BILL"

Denver, Jan 10. Colonel William F Cody ("Buffalo Bill") died today. *Reuter*. William Frederick Cody, better known as "Buffalo-Bill", was born in Scott County, Iowa, in 1846. When quite a lad he migrated with his father to the West, where his life of adventure began, and in Kansas his first contact with the lawlessness of the times was experienced. His father had spoken against slavery to a mob who had no sympathy with

the negro. A desperado drew a knife and stabbed the elder Cody. As he fell young Cody turned to the assailant, saying, "You have killed my father. When I'm a man I'll kill you." Cody died from the effects of the wound in 1857, and the support of the family devolved upon the son. He joined a "bull-train" of overland carriers, and had his first encounter with Indians, and killed his first Indian; for this exploit he was known as the "Boy Indian Slayer". During the gold fever in 1860 he made for the fields, but on his way took service as a pony express rider, an occupation that had its perils from Indians and thieves. Then he acted as scout to a trapping expedition, and killed his first bear. In chasing some elk he broke his leg, and had to remain alone for a month while his friend sought assistance 100 miles away. In 1863 he joined the US Army. By this time he was known as a great scout. He was employed on missions within the Confederate lines, and succeeded in obtaining valuable information. Later he was made chief scout of the Fifth Cavalry

by General Sheridan. In 1867 he made a contract for supplying the Kansas Pacific Railway with meat for its employees while the line was being extended through the wilderness, and in 18 months killed 4,820 buffaloes — whence his sobriquet. In 1868-72 he served as a Government scout against the Sioux and Cheyenne, and in the latter year became a member of the Nebraska House of Representatives. During the Sioux-Cheyenne war of 1876 he served in the 5th US Cavalry, and at the battle of Indian Creek killed the Cheyenne chief, Yellow Hand, in single combat. He again served against the Sioux in the Nebraska National Guard in 1880-91. He will be best remembered as the organizer of the "Wild West Show", which visited Europe first in 1887 and which continued until 1913, when it went into the hands of a receiver.

SIGN UP FOR A WEEKLY EMAIL WITH EXTRACTS FROM THE TIMES HISTORY OF THE WAR WW1.THETIMES.CO.UK

Stranded on plane

Sir, The experience of Frank Gardner with easyJet at Gatwick is far from unusual (Jan 10). Increasingly this airline appears to be using stairs instead of an airbridge. I have mobility problems, and can cope if there is an airbridge, but reject full assistance while I am able to walk certain distances. I flew three times last year with easyJet from Gatwick to Europe. Not once did it supply an airbridge. I couldn't carry my hand luggage while using the handrail to help myself down. At Seville airport I saw a wheelchair passenger carried up the steps of an easyJet plane by two airport staff. It was an undignified experience. Is easyJet saving money by not paying for airbridges? JACQUELINE MOGER
East Preston, W Sussex

Breathing space

Sir, Chris Packham (Jan 9) is right to approach the problem of our ever-shrinking countryside from a different angle. For too long the solution to too many cars has been to build more roads. It might be unpalatable to insist on smaller families but perhaps to limit the number of cars per household would be a viable alternative.

KATE HOBSON
Bickerton, Cheshire

Coached to victory

Sir, All remarkable British sporting success over the past 50 years has been motivated by a remarkable coach. Think Woodward, Brailsford and Ramsey, among others. Hockey is no exception. British success at the 1988 Olympics was managed by another such genius, David Whitaker.

David Westcott (Jan 9) is right to suggest that the 1988 team should be honoured for their outstanding performance, but we should not forget the man who made it happen. EDWARD LITTLE
Cricklade, Wilts

Food for thought

Sir, If Ian Higgins (letter, Jan 8) can afford to donate £20 of groceries each week to a food bank, then surely that is a sign that the economy is indeed in good shape. Or perhaps charity, even in hard times, should simply be done a little more quietly.

JEREMY WHITE
Chapel-en-le-Frith, Derbyshire

Loopiest landlord?

Sir, On the topic of fondly missed but utterly barmy hosts (letters, Jan 7 & 10), I offer Squire Kim Joseph Hollick De La Taste Tickell, who ran the Tickell Arms in Whittlesford near Cambridge. On the front door was his handwritten list of the type of people who were not welcome at the inn, including unescorted women, lefties and men wearing waistcoats but no tie. In the morning he would bath naked in the garden's trout lake and walk back through the bar with algae dripping from his personage. I once had dinner there with James Magan, a Wykehamist and son of Brigadier Bill Magan (obituary, Feb 2, 2010). Come the end of the evening, after an intensive immersion in Wagner, James attempted to pay the bill with a Co-op Bank cheque. The squire stormed over to the table, ripped the cheque into confetti-sized pieces and shouted: "Leave now, you socialist trash."

PETER OATES
Buckden, Cambs