



Public affairs with a difference...

What the Thursday papers say

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Welfare, Work, Energy, jobs

<p>“Civil Service top earners cut by a third” Daily Telegraph</p> <p>The number of senior civil servants who are paid more than the Prime Minister has dropped significantly since the Coalition came to power. Figures to be published today by the Cabinet Office show there are 234 officials paid more than £150,000 a year, down by more than a third in two years.</p> <p>The figures come after a squeeze on salary costs overseen by the Cabinet Office minister Francis Maude since May 2010. He ordered greater disclosure of anyone in Whitehall paid more than £142,500, which is the salary of the Prime Minister. The 234 this year compares with 291 last year and 372 in 2010. The fall in those paid more than £150,000 in the past year has saved the government £8.7million, according to the Cabinet Office.</p>	<p>“Families face £110 energy charge to pay by cheque” Daily Telegraph</p> <p>Energy customers are being charged as much as £110 a year to pay by cheque.</p> <p>The levy imposed by companies for not using direct debit has increased by as much as five times since 2004.</p> <p>The worst offender was E.ON, whose charge for not paying by direct debit rose from £22 in April 2004 to about £110 in the first months of 2012, the study, by Which? magazine found.</p> <p>Scottish Power also imposed costs of more than £100 on its customers who paid by cheque.</p> <p>Npower and SSE said that people who paid by cheque were not being charged more, but that direct debit customers were making a saving that had risen in line with increases in bills. The study also found that low users, including pensioners who live alone in a small property, can be charged around a third extra per unit of gas or electricity, giving them worse value for money. Older drivers pay hundreds of pounds more for car insurance than younger, more reckless motorists, Which? found.</p>
<p>“Searching for migrants not worth the cost” Daily Telegraph</p> <p>Fewer than one in 10 of missing asylum seekers and immigrants uncovered in a Home Office backlog six years ago have been deported.</p> <p>The UK Border Agency has admitted that it is giving up on attempts to find 80,000 foreign nationals who are still missing as it would cost too much money to keep looking for them.</p> <p>It will mark the end of the scandal that broke in 2006 when it emerged that half a million asylum files had been left gathering dust in boxes at the Home Office.</p> <p>More than 180,000 people were allowed to remain in Britain after having their cases considered, while 41,000 were removed.</p> <p>Many others were found to have died and thousands of files turned out to be duplicates.</p> <p>Officials will continue to search for 25,000 individuals who may be living in the country illegally when the other cases are written off.</p> <p>The border agency now has a total backlog of 275,000 immigration and asylum cases that it has not resolved.</p>	<p>Middle classes asked to give up child benefit early The Times</p> <p>Child benefit is worth £20.30 a week for an eldest child, £1,055.60 a year, and £13.40 a week for subsequent children, £696.80 a year. A family with three children faces losing £2,449.20 a year.</p> <p>Hundreds of thousands of families are to be asked to sign away their child benefit as the taxman looks to cut costs from George Osborne’s imminent clampdown.</p> <p>Households with at least one person earning more than £50,000 a year will receive letters from HM Revenue & Customs warning them they are about to lose all or some of their benefit.</p> <p>If their income is likely to remain above £60,000 they will be given the option of surrendering from January their right to what has until now been a universal benefit. The alternative is for the family to continue receiving child benefit but see it clawed back through the tax system. Asking welfare recipients to waive their right to a benefit is unusual but will save the taxman the administration costs of processing hundreds of thousands of such claims.</p>
<p>Minister has his sums wrong on the cost of welfare, says Salmond The Times</p> <p>Alex Salmond has clashed with Iain Duncan Smith, dismissing claims by the UK Work and Pensions Secretary that an independent Scotland would not be able to pay its welfare bill.</p> <p>The First Minister, said that the remarks were “offensive, nonsensical rubbish”. He said Mr Duncan Smith’s figures were wrong. “We contribute 9.6 per cent of the UK’s taxation, with 9.3 per cent of the spending and just over 8 per cent of the population. That is a relative surplus of about £2.7 billion in 2010/11, or £500 for every man, woman and child in the country. The welfare bill is not financed out of North Sea oil, it is financed out of general taxation.”</p>	<p>BARONESS FLATHER: Polygamy, welfare benefits and an insidious silence The Daily Mail</p> <p>For example, a Pakistani man contracts a marriage in his native country, and then brings his wife to England to start a family. Because they have been married only under Islamic law, she isn’t legally registered by British authorities as his wife. Even so, they are able to claim child benefit for any children they have.</p> <p>As a result, several ‘families’, fathered by the same Pakistani man, can all claim benefits as they are provided for by the welfare state, which treats them as if they are not related.</p> <p>Figures are hard to obtain, but it’s thought there may be around 1,000 polygamous families living in the UK, costing taxpayers millions of pounds every year. A friend of mine, who investigated the issue for a BBC Panorama programme, told me of one street in a Yorkshire town where all the residents are Pakistani women with children living on social security. There is not one man living in the street.</p> <p><u>Read more:</u></p>