



***This week, globalisation's very first 'agony aunt', Agony Anne, addresses Prime Minister, David Cameron's, concern to maintain Britain's international competitiveness, so feeling he must lead Britain to win an international 'war' to cut red tape and so liberate British business.***

Dear Hearts,

I frequent a darling local beauty salon for my regular pedicures - Brittany is quite the wizard with top coat extra shine – and whist there I read an article in *The Guardian* (19<sup>th</sup> Nov.)<sup>i</sup> wherein our valiant leader, David Cameron, boldly declared us to be in a global 'economic war'. Imagine! He hit out at 'bureaucratic rubbish' holding back the UK economy. I, being something of a Tory kind of gal, felt quite stirred by his heroic and patriotic call to arms.

Now, David says this is a war we must win. He tells us there's a race between all national economies to free business from the tiresome burden of regulation in an effort to stimulate economic growth. By loosening the stays of regulation we will attract investment, save and create jobs and push Britain to the fore – all extremely rousing stuff.

But just as my faithful canine companion, Molly, routinely discovers when she tastes the ghastly medicine I must sadly administer to ease ailments triggered by her mature years, the thought of dashing David almost immediately turned sour as my intellect swiftly swept in. For this, I realised, is a war no nation can win. But do let me explain.

I concede, of course, that our David has a point. Indeed in today's dizzying world of globally free-moving capital, any nation lagging behind its competitors in the race to loosen regulations and lower taxes, will face economic starvation and inevitable decline. Global markets will punish the hind-most! The war, indeed, is real.

As Molly and I took our morning constitutional and the fresh air cleared my, if I may say so, rather lovely head, I opined to her that ultimately this economic war - this race to be first - is actually a race to the bottom. For it cannot ultimately be in Britain's or any other nation's longer-term interests. It's an economic strategy that would only give business in Britain more power and more freedom to run amok than it already has, and will inevitably leave society and the environment to pay the price. Meanwhile, as other nations carry on cutting *their* taxes and regulations in retaliation, a global culture of ultra-light touch corporate

regulation would be the inevitable result. Global banking crises and scandals greater still than those we have already - and still - endure would be the unavoidable consequence. So, as the cold,



bleak autumnal light flooded the fine royal park that is Molly and my familiar stamping ground, it dawned on me as we strode/padded homeward for cup of Darjeeling and a Garibaldi by the fire that Cameron's campaign was startlingly silly.

Dear David is obliged to defend national competitiveness - alas, neither he nor any national leader has much choice in this. But they, rather like Molly who regularly feels compelled to chase her own tail, fail to recognise the futility

of their behaviour and the global catastrophe it ultimately invites.

Thankfully, all is not lost. For we citizens know better and can, if we wish, halt this relentless downward spiral. We can avoid failure and doom by using our votes in the imaginative and powerful way that Simpol offers us to lead our blind leaders out of their dismal war and into an altogether brighter future. Through Simpol they can be shepherded towards a cooperative global agreement under which businesses everywhere could be robustly regulated and taxed - *without* any nation withering under an economic competitive disadvantage.

Molly, I fancy, will never learn. But we can and, dear Hearts, we must!



I close with a charming picture of Molly resting after an exhausting and utterly futile tail-chasing session. At her age, she really ought to know better!

With love from your beloved, **Agony Anne**. [agony.anne@simpol.org](mailto:agony.anne@simpol.org)

p.s. I know you're just dying to know what the shade of nail polish was that Brittany opted for – well, it was called Frolicsome Fancy.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/nov/19/cameron-bureacritic-rubbish-uk-economy>