

INTRODUCTION

Our first issue of 2018 begins with the text of the annual Harold Wincott Memorial Lecture. In this lecture, **Sir Charles Bean** draws on his many years of experience at the Bank of England to review the changing role of Central Banks after the Great Recession. A response by former Labour cabinet member **Ed Balls** suggests a new body to provide strategic oversight of the Bank.

Do capitalism and economic freedom damage the environment? An empirical article by **Christian Bjørnskov** reviews the issues and concludes that liberalising measures in former communist economies tend to be associated with reduced environmental damage.

The nineteenth-century writer Thomas Hodgskin is often dismissed by liberals as an anti-capitalist ‘Ricardian socialist’. A fascinating reappraisal by **Alberto Mingardi** suggests that Hodgskin had a sophisticated understanding of, and reasoned sympathy for, industrialisation.

Graham Brownlow and **Esmond Birnie** reflect on the economic performance of Northern Ireland and the alleged need for ‘rebalancing’ of its economy, drawing on an interesting comparison with Nordic economies.

It is commonly argued that bankruptcy regimes can keep too many ‘zombie firms’ in business, preventing resources being redeployed in a more productive manner. **Nicos Zafiris** takes a different view, making a case for regimes helping the survival of firms which may have more use as going concerns than their component parts.

Christopher Snowden draws on the insights of his recent book *Killjoys* to argue against the view that the ideas of behavioural economists justify interventionist policy based on ‘libertarian paternalism’. If ‘nudge’ was taken seriously, many existing laws would be repealed and few new laws would be made.

Two articles look in detail at the Chinese banking system. In the first, **Kerry Liu** discusses the growing importance of Negotiable Certificates of Deposit. In the second, **Wenzhe Li** describes and evaluates the experience of targeted monetary policy conducted by the People’s Bank of China.

In the Discussion section, **Damian Carnell** looks critically at the arguments surrounding high pay for CEOs, **Gabriel Stein** sets out the challenges facing Central Banks, **Kevin Dowd** takes issue with **Frank Decker’s** comments on Free Banking in his article in the October 2017 *Economic Affairs*, and Decker replies.

In our regular long Review Article, **Shobhana Madhavan** argues that the effectiveness of policies for growth and development in India depends not only on manipulation of economic variables, but also on profound cultural change.

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