

“Tax the English, Wha Hae!”

The scene is set in an important meeting room in Westminster. Ministers and their advisers sit round a large, polished table. Present are Gawdin, the senior Minister, and Jock, Hamish and Wallace, his tax advisers and assistants.

Gawdin: Let's no' waste any time. The agenda is hoo much muir tax we can get oot of the English. No. I'd better restate that. What further contributions can the people make towards the efficient and prudent running of the economy. We need a lot of noo ideas to fet in before the run-doon to the election. Jock, review the situation for us.

Jock: Aye, Minister. Weel. We started from the idea that we should tax anything the English do a lot.

Gawdin: The public, Jock.

Jock: Och aye, Minister. Sorry. That the public do a lot. Weel. We taxed insurance, air travel, rubbish disposal, house sales, gardens, added to tax on petrol, drink-

Hamish: Not whusky, Jock.

Jock: Aye. Not whusky. Imagine the grumblings in the Hoose if we ded that!

Gawdin: Yes. Yes. Let's get on with et. Any new thoughts on the subject, Wallace?

Wallace: Aye, I have, Minister. Tax the bluidy air they breathe!

Gawdin: This is not an attempt to wreak revenge on the English, Wallace.

Wallace: Muir's the bluidy shame!

Gawdin: Gentlemen, please. I have another farewell lunch with Phony Blah at 12.30. Let's move on, please.

Hamish: Another lunch! Is he never goin' to give et up? What's it in honour of this time?

Gawdin: Saving Africa.

Hamish: Saving Africa is et? Last week it was Saving Northern Ireland. The week before it was Saving the Middle East. What about saving bluidy Britain?

Gawdin: Yes, well. We'll be taking a wee look at that when I'm installed.

Wallace: If I was you, Minister, I would'na bluidy bother with the English part of Britain. Take their money and run! Haw haw!

Jock: Hee hee.

Hamish: Ha ha! That's a guid one!

Gawdin sniggers behind his bitten nails. Recovers hastily.

Gawdin: Gentlemen! Please! Let us continue!

Jock: Hoo about a tax on charity? And charity shops. The English do a lot o' giving. They'd hardly notice a wee tax on what they give to guid causes. Every time they give a poond, or buy a wee paperback for a poond, or a wee flag for a poond, we take, say, 7%.

Wallace: 7%? Are ye off yer heed? 15%, mon! At the bluidy least!

Gawdin: Good thinking, Jock! I like it! A wee tax on charity. But what %? That needs thinking about.

Hamish: It has to be less than 5%, Minister. Otherwise the press will make a big deal of et.

Gawdin: Can we no' introduce it surreptitiously?

Wallace: Syrup what?

Jock: Aye, that would be guid. But how?

Gawdin: Say that we're going to use it for good causes, decided by the government.

A silence round the table.

Jock: A stroke of genius, Minister.

Hamish: Brilliant, Minister.

Wallace: Use et for good causes for the English? That's nae bluidy guid!

Gawdin: Don't be stupid, Wallace. Of course we won't. We'll use it for what we choose. Prudently, of course.

Wallace: Guid.

Gawdin: In fact, while we're at it, we should tax the volunteers themselves and their petrol allowances.

Wallace: Aaah! That's the bluidy ticket, mon.

Gawdin: So. What else?

Hamish: Weel. I had an idea. I was away for the week-end. Took a whole heap of photographs.

Gawdin: Of course! A tax on photos! The English - the public - are always photographing themselves.

Jock: That's true, Minister. But they use their phones to take their pix, noo. Cameras are on the way oot. Taxin' that would'na be easy.

Gawdin: Could we no' monitor the use of phones for taking photographs?

Hamish: Eh?

Gawdin: With CCTV and such-like. Why not? Or satellite monitoring?

Jock: H'm.

Gawdin: Or the police. Why not? Come on! When I'm installed, we can do what we like, remember?

Jock: Ye would'na be popular doing that right now, Minister. In the run-up to the election.

Gawdin: Right. So the next Chancellor of the Exchequer can do it.

A silence round the table.

Jock: Another stroke of genius, Minister.

Hamish: Brilliant, Minister.

Jock: Now you mention it, who is going to be the next Chancellor?

Gawdin: I am.

Hamish: You, Minister?

Gawdin: That's right.

Jock: But...

Gawdin: I ken what you're thinking. But why not? The two jobs can easily be combined. Phony spent most of his time travelling the world. I can do this job standing on my haid. So, put them together and ye've got an unbeatable way to squeeze the English. No. I'd better re-state that. Combining the two posts will enable a more co-ordinated approach to the huge task of managing the nation and keeping it in the forefront of world affairs. The public will know that they are getting best practice at the point of need, from an experienced, prudent leader.

Jock: Brilliant, Minister.

Hamish: Yet another stroke of genius, Minister.

Wallace: Wull it mean we can stick it to the English even muir?