Importing energy

SIR - Charlemagne (September 7th) did not mention a huge additional benefit of a pan-European energy grid: access to the vast reserves of renewable energy in the deserts of north Africa.

We should produce as much renewable energy locally and nationally as we can. But Saharan sun and wind could provide the rest of our energy. With long-distance, direct-current interconnectors bringing in as much extra power as we need, Europe can run its cities and factories on fuel that is free, never runs out, and protects our climate.

The Climate Parliament works with legislators in Morocco and Tunisia, who are keen to export renewable energy. Europe needs to get serious about buying it. We already have a vast supergrid of gas pipelines covering the region. We need to do the same for clean electricity.

NICHOLAS DUNLOP
Secretary-general
The Climate Parliament
London

The burden of debt

SIR - In your Schools brief on debt (“Lending weight”, September 14th), you wrote that the German word for debt, Schulden, also means sin. The German word for sin is actually Sünde. Schulde is, however, also the word for guilt.

This equation of debt with guilt is, perhaps, an interesting reflection of the Protestant ethic and its influence on northern European culture. But sin, absolvement and redemption? I think you would have to talk to the southern Europeans about that.

SØREN TØRPH JÆLLESEN
Oslo

Conquering corruption

SIR - In your article you said that the Liberian president had kept the peace but “fails to reduce graft” (“Skin-deep success”, September 7th). This is misleading. Since 2008, according to the Transparency International Global Corruption

Feeling the effects

SIR - Professor Stephen Bondy perpetrated the myth that

Chernobyl is a wildlife heaven

(Letters, September 7th). The vast majority of peer-reviewed research shows that diversity of animals and plants is severely depressed in contaminated areas there. Animals generally do poorly with young with cats, and severely reduced survival, slow growth rates, and elevated frequencies of tumours.

Chernobyl is a wildlife heaven only in a biblical sense. It is not a paradise for the animals and plants inhabiting its contaminated lands.

LEWIS G. BROWN
Minister of Information
Mononora

Telecoms in Canada

SIR - Canada’s wireless industry is ready to compete head on with foreign-owned companies on a fair and level playing field (“Patriotic but pricey”, September 7th), but we need to close some loopholes before opening the border. The rules of the upcoming spectrum auction were originally designed to encourage new Canadian entrants into the market. But loopholes have been created, some of which can be exploited by foreign incumbents.

For instance, a foreign company can scoop up two prime spectrum blocks when some Canadian companies can bid on only one each. Overseas firms can also piggyback on the networks built by Canadian firms, instead of deploying their own. Canada’s wireless carriers have spent more than $3.32 billion ($3.4 billion) to bring wireless access to 99% of the population. Investment per subscriber was the second highest in the world in 2013.

Foreign companies should not be allowed to exploit these advantages when Canadian firms would not enjoy similar benefits abroad.

BERNARD LORD
President and CEO
Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association
Ottawa

Research and analysis

SIR - Your assertion that Nomura has focused its resources on equity research to electronic trading is misleading (“Analyse this”, September 21st).

Research will always remain a core pillar of Nomura’s business. The squeeze on commission payments from clients for equity research is not a uniform trend. An increasing share of revenue is being allocated to a smaller group of key researchers within each sector. Research must be valuable and relevant; merely being useful is not enough for clients. So, in March Nomura refocused its equity research model around core global sectors and products where it can provide unique insight and trading recommendations.

We are adapting to the clients’ needs, rather than being guided by the inertia of adherence to an old model.

DESMOND SUPPLE
Head of Global Markets Research
Nomura
London

Secret meetings

SIR - You said a solution to the vulnerability of speech being buggied was to “Have important meetings...mutter and avoid direct factual references” (“Cracked credibility”, September 14th). This describes almost every meeting I have ever attended.

In the future, I will suggest that all important meetings are held in the manner you recommend—at night, in a newly ploughed field, in a bowling alley, naked. At least this should result in fewer meetings.

MARK DECKY
Toronto

The cost of living

SIR - The “whopping disparity” in total welfare benefits between states, specifically Hawai’i and Mississippi, which you mentioned (“Taxing hard-up Americans at 95%”, September 7th) must also account for the respective cost-of-living index of each state. The Census Bureau gives Mississippi an index of 92.5, well below the national average of 100, while Hawai’i has the highest index at 119.8. To make welfare benefits more equal, we must first account for these differences, lest we continue comparing apples with oranges.

ZACHARY MOORE
Antioch, California

Turn down the tourists

SIR - Conspicuous by virtue of its absence in your article on noise ("The sound of silence", September 7th), is the racket caused by tourists. In cities “rubber neckers” tend to scream and yell all hours of the day, often in packs.

City people do not enjoy the clutter and cacophony of the tourist hordes. What can be done about this sound offense, if anything? Especially when tourists’ awful eruptions are good for business?

J. DEAN
Professor of Cultural History
University of Versailles