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Letters

We need wholesale reform of the banks

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As Jill Treanor reports ([Anger escalates over Royal Bank of Scotland plan to pay £1.3bn bonuses](#), 25 February), this week's announcement by the 84% tax-payer-owned bank will be unpalatable to the vast majority of British citizens. The very same institutions that left Britain and the world economy tilting on the edge of collapse have benefited the most from state action. Despite this, they are once again cashing in unjust and unearned rewards. In light of this, it's right that we demand "never again": we cannot afford to turn back to the way our banks were run before the crash. We now need wholesale reform.

We therefore call on the government to instigate a package of regulations and reforms that would amount to a new banking settlement, in order to bring financial services more in line with the social and economic needs of the people. In the short term, we should look at capping remuneration (set as a percentage of net revenue), this would help tackle flagrant high pay, shore up bank balance sheets and provide a level playing field across the banking sector. RBS and Lloyds would then no longer be a "prisoner to the market". We should also repeat the bankers' [bonus windfall tax](#), and extend it to [hedge funds](#) and [private equity](#) houses, the riskiest and shadiest financial operators.

In the medium to long term, we must harness the wealth of the financial sector for socially useful means with a [transactions tax](#). We should also have a new [Glass-Steagall Act](#) to separate retail and investment banking. Finally we should now establish a [high pay commission](#). If introduced in the right way, these reforms would significantly transfer risk from the state and taxpayers back on to financial institutions, while at the same time fundamentally change banks behaviour and change the culture of the City. The government must have the conviction to ensure that never again will the short-term financial interests of the finance sector come before the needs of the wider economy and society.

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• These institutions have to count themselves as very lucky to have been kept afloat by the taxpayer. Because of this bail-out many more people are now going to suffer (through no fault of their own), as cuts have to be made in the public sector. What a vote winner it would be if a cabinet minister stood up and told these financial "geniuses" to shut up and be thankful they've got a salary like normal people, and that any bonuses will go towards repaying the loan from the taxpayer.

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