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GEORGE'S STAMP DUTY BONANZA

Chancellor's reforms electrify housing market

By James Chapman
Political Editor

GEORGE Osborne energised the housing market yesterday by dramatically overhauling the hated stamp duty system.

Delighting his party and wrongfooting Labour, he made buying a home thousands of pounds cheaper for 98 per cent of families.

Analysts predicted the Chancellor's move - which takes effect today - will push property prices up almost a third by 2020.

His announcement in the Autumn Statement put the aspirations of homeowners at the centre of next year's general election campaign.

And it echoed his conference speech in 2007 when he bamboozled Gordon Brown's Labour government by saying he would raise the inheritance tax threshold to £1million.

The Chancellor also offered relief for professionals paying the 40p higher rate of income tax, went after banks and tax-dodging multinationals and promised £2billion a year more for the NHS.

He laid out plans for further spending cuts that economists say will shrink the state to its smallest size in 80 years. By 2019/20, public spending will be 35.2 per cent of national income, down from 40.5 per cent now.

Mr Osborne hailed the fastest economic growth in the advanced world - telling MPs that 1,000 jobs are created every day. The UK is expanding two-and-a-half times faster than Germany and seven times the rate of socialist-ruled France.

But he was forced to admit that the budget deficit is coming down too slowly and tax receipts are lower than expected, meaning more years of

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Mum who fled labour ward with her baby: Police find body

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ROUS lies

with her to get their son's birth registered. She wanted to marry him; he said he was philosophically opposed to marriage.

Slowly, their relationship began to unravel. When their son was two, she suspected him of having an affair.

She was right. He was sleeping with another woman, and this infidelity, Jacqui believes, was part of a deliberate strategy to extricate himself from his relationship with her.

His undercover police work was now reaching a conclusion: it had been instrumental in the arrest of two men who had planted incendiary bombs in the fur departments of three Debenhams stores, causing £8 million worth of damage.

At this point, late in 1987, Bob told

Jacqui that the police were on his trail and that he would be fleeing to Spain. And so, Bob said goodbye to her and their son.

'I heard Bob talking to him over the baby monitor,' she says. 'Bob was crying. But I wonder now if they were crocodile tears.'

'When he left, I thought he'd just lay low for a few months and come back.'

But he disappeared completely, and Jacqui had to rebuild her life. She met and married a former professional footballer and they had a son together. Her new husband adopted her first son after exhaustive but vain efforts to find Bob so he could give his consent.

Then her husband died suddenly. Bereft, she redoubled her efforts to find Bob; to restore at least one

Abandoned: Jacqui in 1987, and (far left) the man who betrayed her; undercover police officer Bob Lambert with their newborn son

father to one of her sons. Jacqui scoured the internet for clues, looked up old friends from her days as an animal rights activist and even hired a private detective. But Jacqui was searching for a ghost — 'Bob Robinson' did not exist.

Subsequently, she found short-lived happiness with another man, a university professor, and their relationship produced her third son. But they split up — although they remain cordial friends — and today Jacqui is single.

It was then, in 2012, that she picked up the newspaper and discovered the truth about Bob. The ghost had materialised.

Jacqui read that he had left the police and was now Dr Bob Lambert, a lecturer in terrorism studies at St Andrews University.

She phoned the university. 'A woman in Bob's department answered the phone and I asked to speak to him. I was sobbing. I said: "I'm the mother of his child."'

Within ten minutes, Bob had called her back from his home. 'He said: "Hello Jacqui,"' she recalls. 'I remember saying: "Why me?"'

It was at this point that Bob's composure fractured. A woman, who told Jacqui she was Bob's second wife, took the phone.

She told Jacqui that both Bob's children from his first marriage had died suddenly from a genetic heart defect: his son just a year earlier, in 2011; his daughter when she was 17 — and she urged Jacqui to get her own son to hospital for tests.

Jacqui struggled to take in the awful news. Why hadn't Bob told her that their son might carry a fatal gene?

Thankfully, tests on their son were clear.

Bob arranged a meeting with him, and afterwards Jacqui received a letter from Bob. 'You've raised a fine young man,' he wrote.

Since then, Bob has atoned for his long absence. 'He's been a loving dad to our son,' says Jacqui. 'But why did I have to find out the truth from a newspaper?'

When she met up with him again for the first time for more than 20 years, he came to her five-bedroom detached house in the Home Counties with his second wife.

Jacqui thought there would be definitive answers to all the questions that jostled in her mind. But Bob's obfuscation only deepened her confusion.

'He told me even a psychiatrist couldn't untangle what he was thinking when we were together,' she says. 'He apologised for the hurt. He has since told our son he was in love with me. But there are still many unanswered questions.'

THE tumult in Jacqui's mind has led her to have psychiatric counselling. As she speaks, tears often choke her.

'Some people say that Bob is a psychopath, a man without empathy or remorse,' she says. 'But I don't believe he is. Despite everything, I can't hate him. He'll always be part of my family because he's my son's father.'

'There was love, I'm certain. And I choose to believe, despite everything, there still is.'

She directs the full force of her rancour, however, towards the Metropolitan Police.

'They still refuse to admit this sort of infiltration should never have happened,' she says. 'Sex should never be used as a means of infiltrating groups. It is a form of gross professional misconduct.'

Jacqui, now in her early 50s and head of the law faculty at a sixth-form college, reserves particular anger for the Met's Commissioner, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe. 'He has offered me no apology, no explanation,' she says.

Even in August — two months before Jacqui was awarded her £425,000 settlement — the Met, she says, was still denying that Bob had been an undercover officer.

'They were also still denying he'd fathered our child, even though 6ft of his DNA was walking around in the form of our son,' she says.

'Now they've paid me to go away. They think they can concrete over everything with money. But actually,' she adds, 'I'd rather have had more truth and less money.'

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