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Honours system restricts freedom

You report (November 25) that supporters of the honours system say it rewards 'talented and ambitious civil servants who would otherwise have to be paid much more to prevent them defecting to the private sector'.

This suggests that for them the prospect of an honour is in effect a bribe which is practicably quantifiable in monetary terms. In your leading article (same day) you carry this wider. You say that 'an important motivation for many good deeds' is a hoped-for award of honours.

In order not to prejudice a prospective honour, many people feel obliged to tailor their conduct accordingly, as J. B. Priestley brilliantly showed in his play *An Inspector Calls*.

I suggest this appeal to vanity is an unhealthy feature of our society. Its effect is to restrict freedom of action.¹

¹ *The Times*, 29 November 2003.