

Ukip does reflect voters' concerns

IS Ukip racist? As a Eurosceptic party, its line on immigration is respectable since it targets white immigration and focuses on economic rather than cultural threats. Comments by candidate William Henwood and Ukip election ad star Andre Lampitt are painful for the party because they suggest that talk of European immigration harming British jobs is a dog whistle for deeper concerns.

In surveys, people don't admit to being more concerned with Muslims than Poles, or more unsettled by racial than economic change. But research I have been conducting shows that white British people living in areas with rapid increases in ethnic minorities are significantly more hostile to immigration. That is, a 40-year-old white Briton with no qualifications living in a poor urban area with a 25 per cent increase in minorities is nearly five percentage points more likely to oppose immigration than someone with the same profile in a similar area with no minority increase.

Replace minority increase with an increase of European migrants and you get no effect. Moreover, the children of European immigrants tend to become White British, limiting the longer-term cultural impact of EU immigration.

I don't think Ukip is particularly stoking attitudes on immigration – there isn't much between the Conservatives and Ukip in their aspirations to limit migration – but it does reflect an underlying set of concerns across the UK.

Prof Eric Kaufmann, Birkbeck College

REACTIONS ranging from mock outrage to headless-chicken hysteria to the Ukip ads and supporters' comments about Lenny Henry and Islam have merely highlighted the lack of a convincing alternative offer to the British public on the EU and immigration by Ukip's opponents.

Ukip is setting the agenda and getting all the publicity. Pointing and hysterically shouting "They're wrong" is just playground politics.

Nick Clegg attempted to launch a positive case for the EU last week – but nobody was listening, so little authority does he now have. For everyone but die-hard Lib-Dems, Clegg lost the debates against Nigel Farage and lost badly, giving the Ukip leader an aura of credibility well beyond what he deserves. Agreeing to them was a huge mistake.

Paul Harper



Getting high: urban explorer Dr Bradley Garrett scaling a crane on the Shard in 2011

Support the city explorers

I DON'T blame anyone who wants to see London from a different angle than from their desk (Will Self, April 25). Urban explorers put themselves and maybe others' property at risk, but doesn't every child who climbs a tree or a wall? Had the "place-hackers" who TfL and the police have brought to trial squatted an empty commercial building, they wouldn't have committed a criminal offence. Don't waste taxpayers' money making criminals out of them.

Karen Tarelli

I CAN'T subscribe to the lionising of Bradley Garrett and his friends. What they do is dangerous and addictive – they seem to go to ever greater lengths to get the same rush.

But I do welcome the way they draw attention to the privatisation of London. This is not the only future, as architect Jan Gehl has demonstrated by shaping Copenhagen as a place to be, not just a place to shop.

If all who profess a passion for London could use this trial as an opportunity to trigger debate about the city we want, there might be a positive outcome for all.

Jon Alexander, New Citizenship Project

The Tube strike divides opinion

THE Tube strike is being misrepresented by the RMT as a fight for its members' jobs. But there is no need to employ people to sit in ticket offices to sell tickets and there will be no need to employ Tube drivers – Victoria line trains already run automatically between stations. The RMT's attitude is pure Luddism which, had it prevailed in the past, would mean we would have no Tube system since the Sedan Chair, Hansom Cab Drivers, and Ostler's Union would have prevented it.

Stephen Levrant, W4

AS London Underground and the RMT trade abuse, too much attention is being paid to physical ticket offices. It is not the loss of offices but of jobs which has driven union members to vote for strike action.

Transport for London has yet to explain why it can dispense with so many frontline staff in the context of ever-increasing passenger numbers – passengers which it accepts will continue to rely on human staff in spite

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Stephen Levrant

of modernisation. It is about time TfL explained this to the public, and clarified Underground boss Mike Brown's comments that stations could be "perfectly safe" if left unstaffed at times.

Perhaps it could also say how long it will take under the job cuts programme to recoup the money wasted by the avoidable collapse of the signalling project on the Circle, District and Metropolitan lines.

R Lavanchy, former industrial reporter

ALMOST all construction jobs in London are on brownfield sites where there is nowhere to park, so workers – mostly self-employed subcontractors – rely on early morning trains and Tubes to come in. Then the knock-on effect of strikes on road traffic disrupts the logistics of equipment and materials deliveries.

Generally the result of each day of a Tube strike is to lose a whole day's production. Construction programmes driven by developers are so tight, especially on projects

tendered during the recession, that jobs running even slightly behind are likely to run into damages, at the cost of hundreds of thousands of pounds per project, millions across the industry. Do estimates of this week's strike costing the London economy £150 million take into account these costs?

Construction manager

I HAVE been living in France as a student and am moving back to London tomorrow, bringing back a large and heavy suitcase. I booked my ticket home months ago; my train gets into St Pancras at 10.30pm, by which point we are warned the limited Tube service will already be running down. Inconvenience is an understatement.

Kavya Kaushik

Many Londoners would like to see Boris Johnson as Prime Minister. Not me. If he can't crack the RMT, what chance does he have against the Putins of this world?

Stephen Taylor, W5

The "threat to elections" (Mail firm sends poll cards to wrong voters, Fri) is a reminder that the sell-off of Royal Mail wasn't just a financial fiasco – it was also profoundly wrong in principle. The ideology of privatisation, which has seen valuable, essential public assets put into the hands of companies whose sole aim is profit, is now clearly, definitively bankrupt – and the public knows it.

Natalie Bennett, Green Party leader

Jane Eades (Thur): what border expansions by Israel took place while Tony Blair was PM? In that time Israel withdrew unilaterally from all of the territory it was occupying in Lebanon in 2000 and from Gaza in 2005, and

handed over much of the West Bank as part of the Oslo accords. But why let the facts get in the way of hatred of Israel? Contrary to Eades, I think Blair's concerns about Islamic extremism should be taken very seriously, especially given the time he has spent in the Middle East – though it should be noted that it was Islamic extremists who most exploited the "democracy" experiment that he pushed so hard to impose while in office.

Edgar Davidson

So what if inheritance tax is now payable on the average home in more than half of London boroughs? Homeowners and their heirs are simply

the beneficiaries of a broken housing market. Make a fuss instead about the standard rate of VAT still being at 20 per cent, which hits everybody regardless of wealth.

Philjer

Congratulations on your cricket coverage over the season thus far. Your longer interviews with the likes of Ramps and Chris Rogers are refreshing and important at a time when the BBC TV editors seem to have completely ignored our national summer sport, despite this being one of the most interesting domestic terms for a very long time. Keep it up!

Matt Joplin

Mark Shand was the kind of man we need more of in this world. He both worked for conservation and had the guts to do what he wanted, not conform to standards he didn't believe in.

Mark Taha

All thinking citizens should refrain from snorting says Coke the Biography co-author Natalia Naish. Most thinking citizens already do; it is the usual gang of spam-heads who continue.

Patrick Murray

Miriam Clegg is mistaken; a man can't have "more cojones", he can only have two.

Tess Kamara

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