

WEST END FINAL

Evening Standard

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Murdoch outfoxed

» SENSATIONAL SERIALISATION OF THE BOOK CHARTING
THE DECLINE OF A MEDIA EMPIRE: PAGES 4&5

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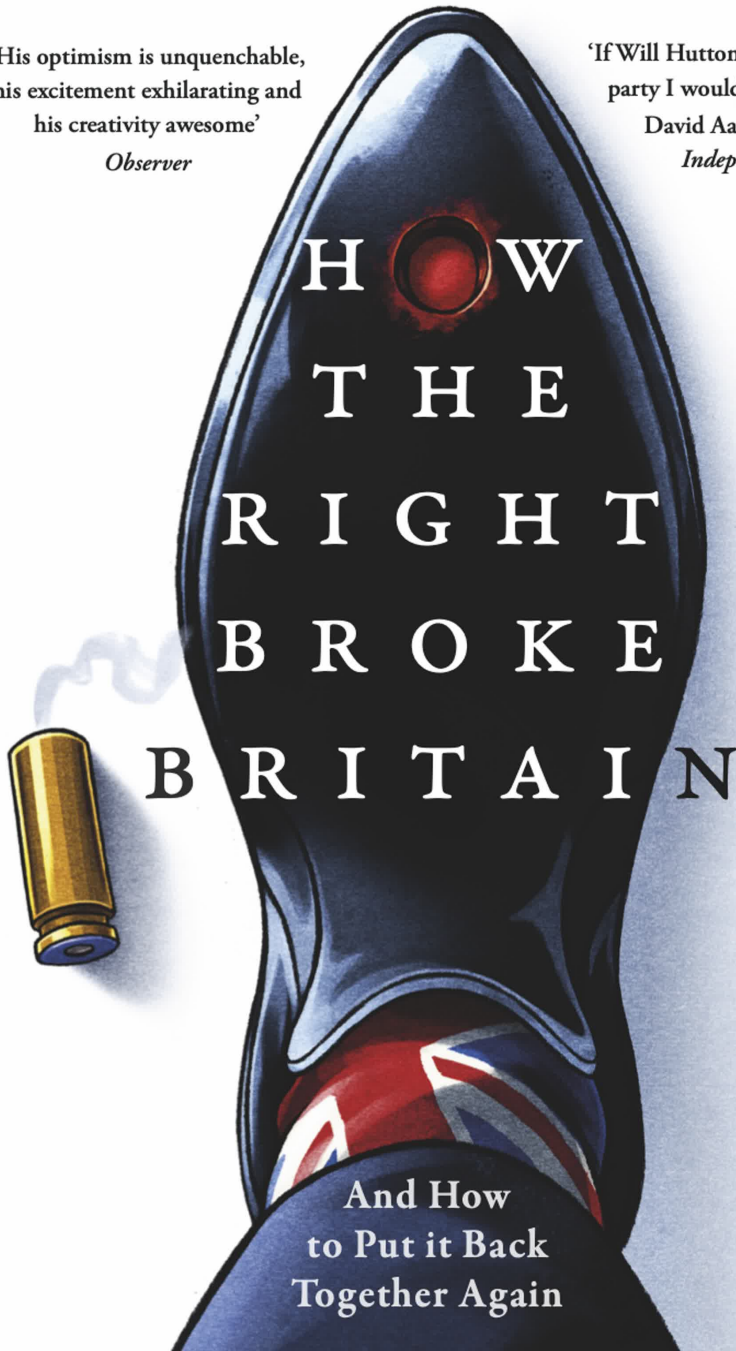
Will Hutton

'His optimism is unquenchable,
his excitement exhilarating and
his creativity awesome'

Observer

'If Will Hutton were a political
party I would vote for him'

David Aaronovitch,
Independent



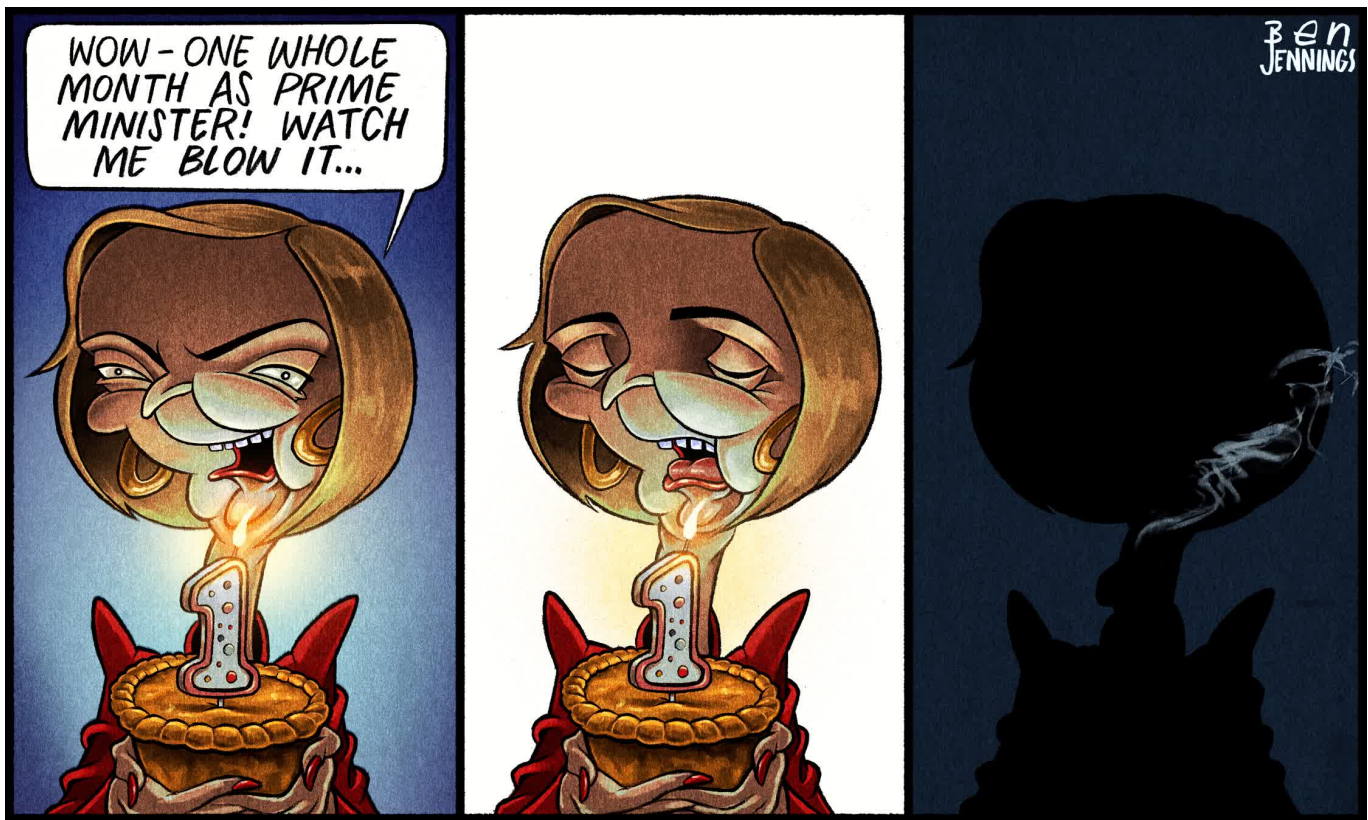
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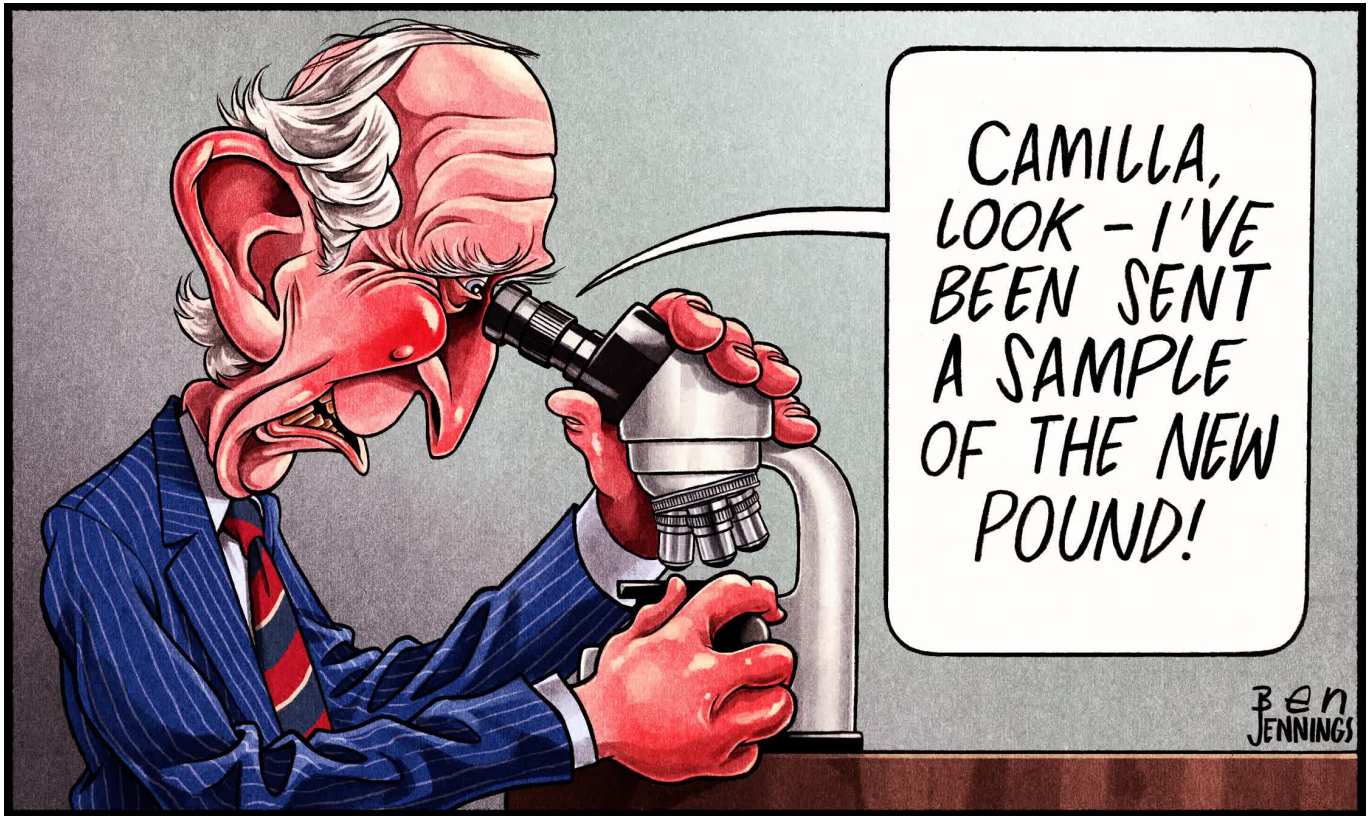
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Are Van Gogh's sunflowers worth more than real ones? *George Monbiot, page 3*

James Corden, and one night in celebrity jail *Emma Brockes, page 4*

The hunt for Russia's war criminals *The long read, page 5*

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Daily
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life &
arts
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The Guardian Thursday 20 October 2022

Opinion
and ideas

Journal



Cut, cut, cut: a Britain cast back into the doom loop

**Aditya
Chakraborty**



As you may have heard, this country has a new ruler. Jeremy Hunt now sets the government's course and even, critics carp, decides who sits around the cabinet table (so long, Suella Braverman, and thanks for all the tofu jokes); Liz Truss is merely his barely human shield. But very few of this week's tributes to the "real prime minister" mention that precisely 18 people voted for him to take that job. That is the grand total of MPs who backed Hunt in this summer's Tory leadership contest, from which he was ejected in the very first round. "Who voted for this?" Truss was asked when she unveiled her mini-budget. As Hunt dismantles her entire programme, we know who voted for him, down to their very names. They make up 0.00003% of the population.

Yet rather than dismay, what pours forth from the politico-media classes is undiluted relief. "It is just so good to have a grownup in the room, someone who commands respect," gushes one senior Tory MP. Others praise the new boss as a "calming influence" on all-important financial markets, because they must be appeased and Hunt fancies himself as the guilt-whisperer.

In just over a week, the new chancellor will return to the Commons armed with £30bn or more in spending cuts aimed at restoring credibility with investors. For the vast array of politicians and pundits this is terrible – and essential. After weeks of City chaos, even the most liberal of commentators have bought into a dangerous idea: that you can never buck "the markets".

Behind this mentality lies a whole mix of things, including the very understandable schadenfreude that comes with watching the Britannia Unchained lot find out that the markets don't actually love them back. And who wouldn't find joy in seeing the double-breasted, vacant-eyed beetroots who make up the parliamentary Conservative party await an electoral tide that will sweep them out into oblivion? But the "markets know best" is not the lesson of the past few weeks, or the pandemic, or the bankers' bailout before it. And believing so puts you on a collision course with voters.

You can see the result today: the UK is once again in the grip of austerity and anti-democratic politics – when we got into this crisis precisely because of austerity and democratic failure. The vast spending cuts made by George Osborne wrecked our hospitals, our schools and our town halls, and stoked the frustrations that ensued

ILLUSTRATION:
BEN JENNINGS

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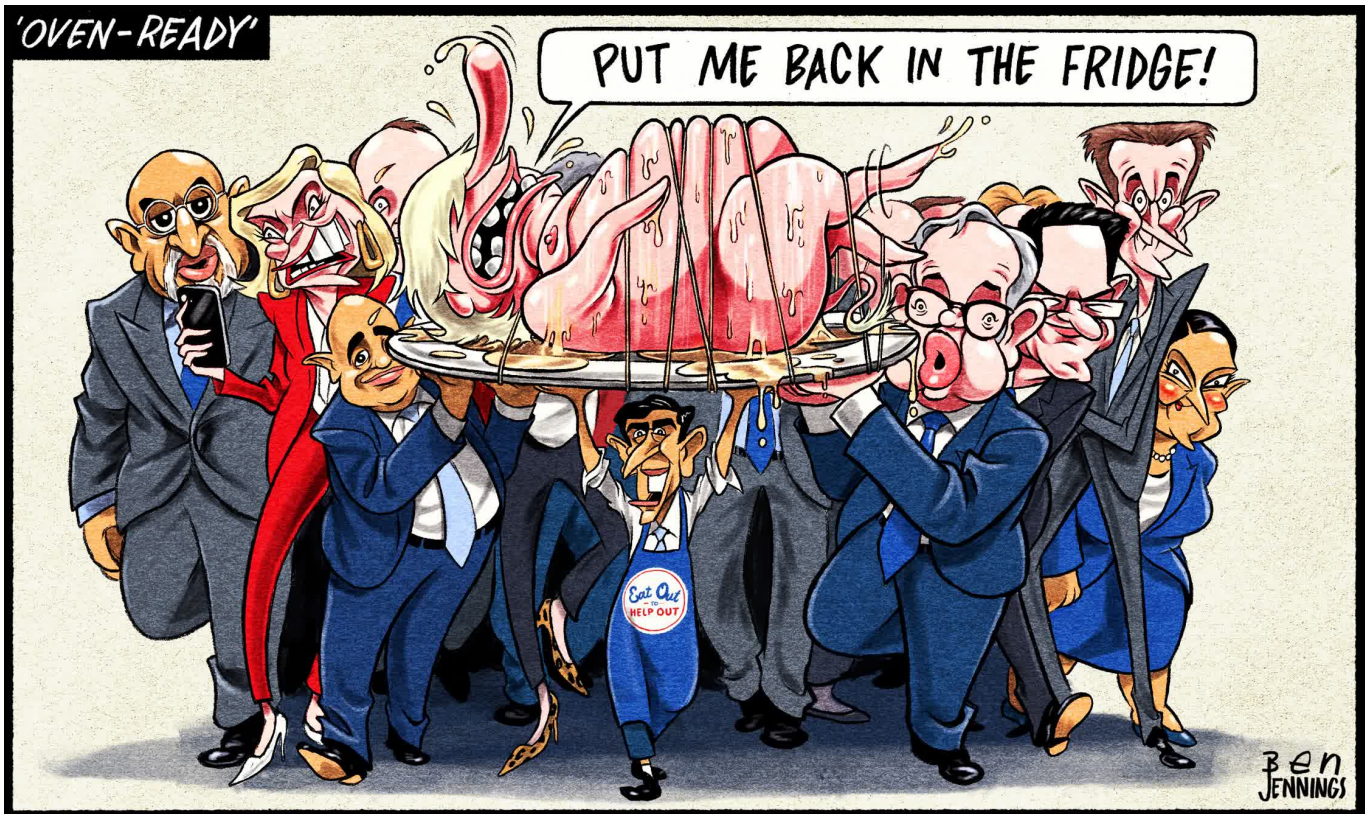
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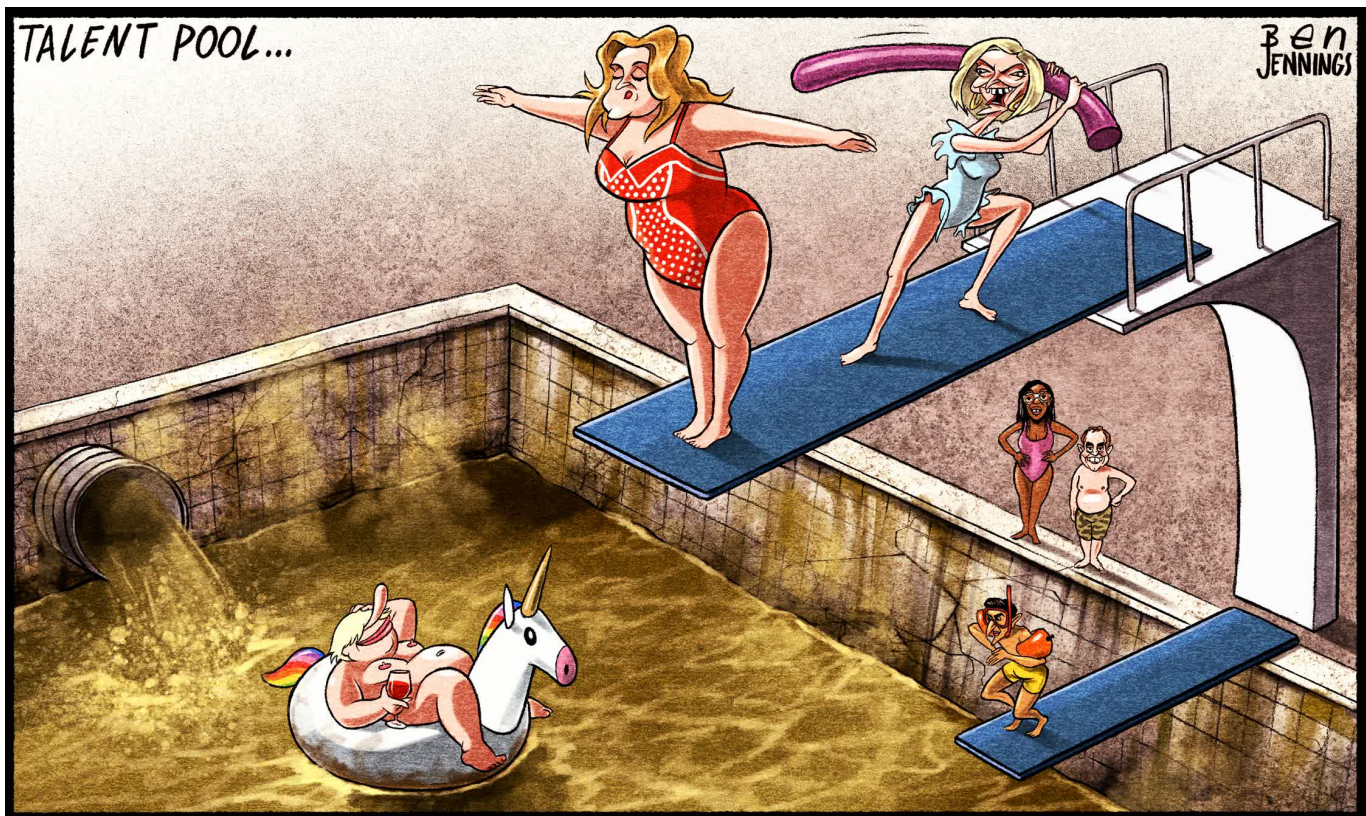
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