

Letters



Labour's new friends

by George Parker and Jim Pickard
A chore and bore as a Labour minister [under Tony Blair] was sitting with business leaders at plastic dinners to urge them to donate to Labour. They were not remotely interested in Labour values or policy but wanted proximity to cabinet ministers to lobby for exemptions from paying their dime to the nation or get some regulation protecting health or the environment changed.

The state of today's Conservative party suggests that getting a handful of super rich to pay for our politics does not guarantee happy results for the party crawling to big money. Most other democracies have simply banned the practice and accept that democracy pays for democracy. It is small change for the price of cleaning up politics.
Denis MacShane, London

Heartening. Also, how astonishing that anyone rational or sentient would be financing the Tories. In 14 years, they've brought blight and shame to this country. Now that there's a robust alternative, they'll be annihilated.
Connor Clare via FT.com

Edward Enniful on Robert Mapplethorpe

True master photographer and chronicler of his time. That said, don't forget about his Flowers series, it's superb. The lighting captures the subject for stunning results.
Elihu12 via FT.com

Bun love

by Imogen West-Knights
Good piece. My wife is Swedish. She and her family, when together, eat buns. And when not eating buns, they're discussing buns.
MrTitus via FT.com

Wonderful article, and the title had me listening to Chris Barber - and Eric Clapton and Wynton Marsalis - singing the "Ice Cream"

song. Only in the FT do articles like this appear.

Michel Souris II via FT.com

Stumbling over the jagged frontier of AI

by Tim Harford
Interesting, as always. Could GPT-4 compose a clerihew on Alan Turing? A pair of rhyming couplets with a biographical theme shouldn't be beyond it, but what about silly rhymes, poor scansion and a twist at the end?

Here's a starter from a human:
*The brilliant Alan Turing
Could predict the advent of computing.
But he really made his mark
In the secrecy of Bletchley Park.*
David Telford, Milnthorpe, Cumbria

What the world needs now, a tool that enables management consultants to deliver more reports faster. Thanks Tim, for casting a cloud over my day.
Noctivagans via FT.com

The awful truth is the US can go it alone

by Simon Kuper
Simon Kuper's thought-provoking article makes an important point, that Trump senses the US can go it alone, and - according to Kuper - correctly so. But he vastly overstates the case.

US security interests do not start and stop at the border. It is still the world's largest importer and foreign investor and is far more dependent on both channels of exchange than it was in 1945. According to a 2022 Business Roundtable report, 41 million US jobs depended on trade in 2019. US sea lanes, which are the world's, must remain open. US dominance in high-tech sectors promises growth on world markets as far as the eye can see. And the fact that it is unthinkable for its enemies to invade the mainland - for example, to stage an attack across the Bering Strait and through Canada, or to recruit Cuba or Mexico as a forward base - is surely related to America's military might



▲ FEBRUARY 17/18
Labour's megadonors

and its remarkable capacity to build and (so far) sustain alliances.
Uri Dadush, School of Public Policy, University of Maryland, US

Simon Kuper writes that "global trade only enhanced American prosperity a little". Global trade is dollar based. That makes the US dollar the world's reserve currency, which in turn enables the US to run vast deficits without causing the harm such deficits would usually bring to any other nation. I'd say that was more than a little.
With compliments... via FT.com

Why Gen Z ditched the plonk

by Hannah Crosbie
I loathe the labels of "millennials", "Gen Z" etc because they just lead to stereotyping and lazy mythmaking, but it's still interesting to read about the habits of younger consumers. "Drink less but drink better" certainly makes sense in a social media-dominated culture where chat about "wellness" is constant, but where good information about food and drink has never been more accessible.
EatTheCSuite via FT.com

Could any personal premium account managers out there give me a call?

by Robert Shrimsley
Be careful what you wish for. I visited my bank a few years ago after I could not complete a certain transaction on their website. I was greeted in the lobby by a bunch of kids (OK, in their twenties) in T-shirts and with tablets offering to take down my details and liaise with the manager on my behalf. One informed me they were part of the bank's efforts to put a friendly face on banking. I did not react as intended and informed him, in a voice so loud I immediately regretted it, that I was not interested in banking with underdressed children. I saw the manager half an hour later.
Edith James via FT.com

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