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University students ripped off

E LEFT-WING lecturers voted for another three days of disruption this week, preferring to stand on picket lines at 58 universities rather than teach over a million of their students.

It's not as if their current crop of students haven't suffered enough over the last few years at the hands of the people who are supposed to be educating them. It started with strike action in November 2019 when 40,000 staff at 60 universities walked out, joined by another 14 universities in January 2020, followed shortly afterwards by the Covid lockdown from March 2020.

Students I spoke to said campuses have been closed, libraries locked, and that most online lectures have been woeful – and yet despite all that they've had to continue paying student fees of over £9,000 year. They have been treated appallingly, paying through the nose over the last two years – and for what? Strikes, followed by lockdown, followed by more strikes.

What I can't understand is why

they haven't marched across campuses, demanding a refund, and confronting the striking lecturers about having their student experience ruined.

Maybe some couldn't be bothered with the aggravation of getting a refund, especially when repayment was some years away, but I know some who feared reprisals – being marked out as troublemakers, getting their work marked down and leaving with a lower degree level. That fear has effectively silenced them.

What has happened to our universities? They should be centres of excellence, places that allow free speech and enable debate, but all too often they are anything but, with Left-wing ideology being rammed down people's throats and the no-platforming of anyone who happens to hold a different view.

Universities should be value for money too and they should value their students (who are their customers after all) but too many seem to treat them with contempt.

Universities claim they can't afford to give refunds and that it would put them under an unbearable financial strain. Well, I have some news for them – that has happened to businesses up and down the country during the lockdowns.

Isn't it time universities were made to operate in the real world, and to treat their customers like businesses have to? University students deserve a refund.



P A NUMBER of properties in my Shipley constituency in West Yorkshire lost their power supply last Friday and a number of them only got it restored on Wednesday this week. This included elderly people and young families with babies.

On top of that they found it difficult to get reliable information about the timescale for their supply to be restored and often calls to the Northern Powergrid helpline went unanswered or were cut off, like their electricity.

I have to say the team at Northern Powergrid were extremely helpful when I contacted them on behalf of my constituents but surely it shouldn't take five days (and longer in some cases) to restore power to homes following a storm which lasted for a day or so.

I have no doubt engineers were working their socks off – often in very poor and cold weather – and I have no criticism of them.

But surely as a country we should be far more resilient when there is a power cut in these circumstances, so we can get families back to normal far quicker and ensure customers at their wits' end are given regular information so they know what is going on.

Esther & Philip

WESTMINSTER'S POLITICAL HUSBAND-AND-WIFE TEAM REFLECT ON THE WEEK'S EVENTS IN YOUR DAILY EXPRESS

Pictures: PA; GETTY

No masking erosion of freedoms

P FROM the outset, the Government's Covid-19 rules have restricted our freedoms and it is clear that the majority of them – such as the rule of six and the 10pm curfew – have been (despite what was claimed) entirely arbitrary and without any scientific basis.

One of the worst examples of the suffocation of our basic freedoms – without any good reason – is the mandatory wearing of masks, something that was reintroduced this week in shops and on public transport.

For the Government to make something compulsory – enforceable by law – there must be an overwhelming case for doing so. Even by the Government's own admission, they haven't come close to meeting that test. They now do it willy-nilly, on a whim, as a precaution on the off-chance it might help, even if there is no decisive evidence to support it.

Some people seem to equate the public wearing of face masks with NHS staff wearing PPE. Nothing could be further from the truth. Masks tend to be stuffed into pockets and handbags and dragged out for the 63rd time for use when needed. In effect people are putting a dirty rag on their face. Some are discarded in public toilets or on pavements, where they also become an environmental hazard.

We have repeatedly been told



FACE VALUE: Mandatory coverings don't make a difference in Covid fight

that the Government is being “led by the science” during the pandemic, as if all scientists share one perspective. That is certainly not the case, and Prof Robert Dingwall this week said the effectiveness of the public wearing of face coverings ranged from “minimal to nil”.

One only has to look at those parts of the UK – Wales and Scotland – along with other countries in Europe that have continued with mandatory face coverings to see that they don't make a blind bit of difference to the transmission of the virus and the number of cases.

If people want to wear a mask then they should be free to do so. However, if people don't want to

wear a mask, they should be free to decide that for themselves too.

In the early days of Covid-19, all interventions, from social distancing to isolation and mask-wearing, went unchallenged by most because those measures were perceived to be temporary, and people probably thought there was more evidence to support wearing face masks, for example, than turns out to be the case.

I have found it chilling how easily the public have been (deliberately) frightened into giving up their freedoms. We cannot allow ourselves to sleepwalk time and again into the kind of authoritarianism we would usually associate with Communist China.

E I THINK it would be fair to say that the last month or so has not seen the Government in the best light, and so the comfortable Conservative by-election win in Old Bexley and Sidcup was pleasing – helped by the legacy of James Brokenshire and the excellent candidate Louie French (below), who I look forward to welcoming to Parliament as the new MP.

However there is no room for complacency. Perhaps the most concerning aspect for the Conservatives was the Reform Party – led by Richard Tice on a platform to the right of the Conservatives – coming third.

The Government needs to heed this warning shot across the bows and ensure it gets back on a solid Conservative path again. We cannot afford such a split in our vote at the next general election.



GB News Trumps all its rivals

P WHAT a breath of fresh air GB News has been – and I am not just saying that because Esther co-hosts a show on there with the wonderful Tonia Buxton!

It has been such a pleasure to hear opinions and views which are mainstream in the country but which would never be given airtime on the BBC, Channel 4 News or Sky News.

In fact Sky News has become so dreadful that it seems to have become the media arm of Extinction Rebellion and Insulate Britain.

Nigel Farage's world exclusive interview with Donald Trump this week ensured the audience for GB News was higher than that for the BBC and Sky News.

I hope GB News goes from strength to strength – it is certainly filling a gap in the market that will never be satisfied by the other politically correct Left-leaning news outlets on TV.



E I AM sorry that after almost 400 years of Royal ties, Barbados has become the world's newest republic. Prince Charles was there to say farewell and mark Barbados making its way in the world led by a female President and Prime Minister. By the cheers of the crowd, I have a feeling that one day it will have Rihanna as another female President. You heard it here first!

P WHEN the House of Commons changed the rules in January 2019 to allow proxy voting for MPs on maternity and paternity leave, I put forward an amendment which was accepted which extended the right to a proxy vote for a short period of time for those women who had suffered a miscarriage.

I therefore support a Bill which came before the House of Commons yesterday from SNP MP Angela Crawley (right) who wants to change the law so that women who miscarry before 24 weeks get three days of paid bereavement leave.



EVIL STEPMOTHER AND DAD MUST ROT IN JAIL FOR KILLING ARTHUR

E THE stepmother and father who tortured and killed six-year-old Arthur Labinjo-Hughes are cruel beyond belief. The pair subjected the defenceless boy to prolonged depraved attacks, repeatedly starving and beating him, so that in his final hours he was left

whimpering “no one loves me” “no one is going to feed me”, before his stepmother landed the final blows that killed him.

What sentence can ever reflect the barbaric pain they inflicted on that boy? I will have nightmares thinking about what they did. I can only hope that in prison they

have nightmares of his ravished remains, nightmares that turn into “daymares”, so their every waking and sleeping moment is filled with the screams of a tortured boy, and so their souls suffer for all time in the hell they created for him. The pair should never be allowed out of prison.