

Funding the Future

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There is only one story in the news this morning, and it is Gary Lineker's tweets.

For the record these are the tweets that he sent that have put him in the news:



There is no huge influx. We take far fewer refugees than other major European countries. This is just an immeasurably cruel policy directed at the most vulnerable people in language that is not dissimilar to that used by Germany in the 30s, and I'm out of order?

It is the last sentence of the second tweet that put him in the news. It is a sentiment with which I agree, unsurprisingly, because it is true. In my opinion, as a factual observation it cannot be faulted. It is obvious that Gary Lineker thinks so as well. He is very obviously unrepentant.

So what is the storm about? According to [Richard Ayre](#), a former BBC Controller of Editorial Policy speaking on Radio 4 this morning, it is about impartiality. Lineker is, apparently, allowed to talk about football on the BBC and not have political opinion, or he can go elsewhere and have that opinion, but he cannot talk about the abuse of asylum seekers and work as a sports reporter for the BBC. That is, apparently, not possible.

Saying so Ayre did, of course, reflect the opinion of the Conservative Party. They are outraged by Lineker on this issue.

They forget that Lineker was actually engaged by the BBC to talk about the abuse of human rights in Qatar in place of the opening ceremony of the World Cup not many months ago. All that is different now is that he is talking about the egregious abuse of human rights here as well.

They also ignore the very obvious bias in so much BBC broadcasting. Tonight's Question Time has a Tory MP, a Tory peer and Richard Madeley on it, all obviously right wing, and it is chaired by Fiona Brice, whose pro-Tory bias when chairing the programme is well documented. She allows Tories more time and interrupts them less.

Ayre also ignores the fact that this morning the BBC were saying 'Stop the Boats', a Tory three word slogan, is the political issue of the moment, and that by doing so they push all other issues of concern off that agenda as if its role is solely to amplify Tory messages in the Tory press without for a moment using its own editorial discretion or judgement.

What becomes apparent is that judgement is allowed, but only so long as it is Tory biased. In addition criticism is allowed, but only so long as it is not of the Tories. Then it is unacceptable.

Lineker is clearly not planning to stand down. As he has noted:



World's gone mad. 🤔

Tom Peck @tompeck · 10h

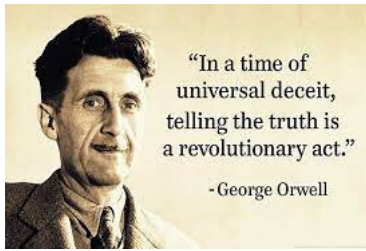
The number one story on the BBC News at Ten is Gary Lineker's tweet. Not the illegal migration bill, Gary Lineker's opinion on it. That is totally, totally fucking insane.

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Again, he is right, barring one thing which I also noted on Twitter:



Lineker is not the only person to have told the truth, of course. But he has committed the revolutionary act of being noticed doing so. He spotted and called out fascism by those who think calling someone a fascist much more serious than actually being one. And for that the Tories are, as ever, calling him inept or are telling him that he should stick to football as if someone who knows how to play that game exceptionally well should not have political opinion when everything is political, including football.

What to think about this then? At least three things. First, support Lineker if you can. He might be wealthy. He might be famous. He is also a human being under attack for saying the right thing. At some time that is going to be a lonely place. He will need resilience to fight this, as seems to be his intention. I wish him well. He will need all the support he can get.

Second, monitor the BBC. Their role as re-broadcaster of government opinion is becoming deeply troubling. They are the real story. Their impartiality has gone: they are now a state mouthpiece. So far I have not seen or heard any serious analysis of the government's new policy there. Sky is considerably more effective at doing that and is now the most reliable source of domestic news given that Channel 4 spends so much time on foreign affairs.

Third, appreciate that this is about the right to stand up to fascism. Years ago, soon after John Christensen and I effectively co-founded the Tax Justice Network and were leading its work we discussed what the biggest threat to the work we were doing might be. We both suggested it was fascism. That was back in 2005. We hoped we would not have to face it. We did, however, know that was the neoliberal destination: it is a philosophy that does not tolerate opposition and is fascistic in tendency as a result. Now we are there.

Now everyone has a choice. They can stand up to fascism or they can enable it. Silence is not an option. Germany in the 1930s proved that.

Lineker has stood up to fascism. So must we all. Our freedom depends upon us doing so.