

Comment&Debate

Ice-cream? Watch out for sharks

Gary Younge

1 **E**H Carr argued in his landmark essay, *The Historian and His Facts*, almost 50 years ago:

“The facts speak only when the historian calls on them. It is he who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context ... It is the historian who has decided for his own reasons that Caesar’s crossing of that petty stream, the Rubicon, is a fact of history, whereas the crossing of the Rubicon by millions of other people before or since interests nobody at all.”

2 When it comes to media coverage of immigration in Britain the facts that are given the floor, the context in which they are interpreted and the conclusions that then emerge make rational debate, let alone effective policy making, nigh impossible. The problem is not that the facts are selective, but that they are selected poorly and with the specific intent of creating panic, fostering resentment and stoking xenophobia.

3 And it works. A Mori poll in 2002 revealed that more than a third of Britons believed there were too many

immigrants. It’s not difficult to see why. The public’s mean estimation of the proportion of immigrants in Britain was 23%; the actual figure was around 4%. If you walked around thinking everything was six times larger than it actually was you would find most things scary.

4 So it was last week when the Office for National Statistics released its most recent employment figures. The statistics showed a net increase of 188,000 people in work between April and June compared to January and March. Of those, the number of UK-born people employed rose by 41,000 (a 0.2% rise) while those born outside the UK went up by 145,000 (a 3.9% rise). Compared with the same period in 2009 the figures showed an overall 101,000 increase in employment. Over this period, the number of UK-born people with jobs fell by 15,000 (-0.1%) while the number for those born outside the UK went up by 114,000 (3.1%).

5 Such are the facts. In a paper released on Monday called *Immigration and Employment*, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) produced an analysis of the coverage. On their front page the Express announced “Foreigners get 77% of new jobs in Britain as too many of us live on benefits.” Page two of the Mail declared: “Foreign workers surge by 114,000 ... but the number of Britons with jobs falls.” Meanwhile the Telegraph stated: “Record four out of five jobs going to foreigners between May and June.” Each then went on to imply whatever

new “British jobs” were created had been taken by foreigners.

6 Reasonable people may debate whether the language in these articles is inflammatory, but no one can deny that they are all in some way inaccurate. In their desperation to define the “other”, all three papers mistake nationality for place of birth. To be born outside the UK does not make you foreign.

7 Given all made the same mistake, this was no mere semantic mix-up – it reflects a mind-set. Nor is the distinction a matter of pedantry. An error in the language presages an error in the facts. The Office for National Statistics figures actually show a tiny rise in the employment of Britons of 4,000 between this year and last and a more sizable jump in the employment of foreigners of 97,000 (4.2%).

8 Nonetheless the broad trend these papers describe is accurate. The lion’s share of the rise in employment over the last year can be accounted for by the increase in non-British citizens finding work. The trouble is, this does not tell us an awful lot about “new” jobs or how immigrants are faring in the job market compared with Britons.

9 As Sarah Mulley, a senior fellow at the IPPR, points out in her paper, since most migration is economic, people are less likely to come and more likely to leave if jobs are scarce – making unemployment among

migrants less likely. Also, migrants are less likely to be settled and therefore can go where jobs are plentiful.

10 But it is a leap of (bad) faith to conclude from those statistics that British employment is stalling because immigrant employment is going up. The fact is, anecdotal evidence aside, there simply is no proof that immigrants cause unemployment. “The best available UK micro-economic evidence on the effects of migration on employment,” concluded an earlier IPPR report which was in line with research in other OECD countries, “finds either no effect at all, or very small negative effects.”

11 Shark attacks and ice-cream sales both rise in the summer. But that doesn’t mean ice-cream attracts sharks or people react to fear about shark attacks by eating more ice-cream. Unemployment is important and people’s anxieties about immigration should be addressed. But their prejudices needn’t be pandered to and can’t be confronted on the basis of wanton misinterpretations. Stopping immigration as a means of fighting unemployment makes about as much sense as banning ice-cream sales in a bid to reduce shark attacks. And it will do as much good too.

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Tekst 6 Ice-cream? Watch out for sharks

- 1p 21 Why does Gary Younge mention Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon (paragraph 1)?
To illustrate that
- A historians frequently disagree on the significance of historical facts.
 - B it is hard to question the validity of what historians call fact.
 - C there is a fine line between historical fact and historical fiction.
- 1p 22 What becomes clear from paragraph 2?
- A Every debate on immigration remains inconclusive due to people's disbelief of hard facts.
 - B Lack of proper information makes immigrants uncertain of their status in their new country.
 - C The media draw premature conclusions on the subject of immigration.
 - D The press have turned the topic of immigration into a minefield.
- 1p 23 What is the main point made in paragraph 3?
- A Ignorance of the actual state of affairs evokes unrealistic negative emotion.
 - B Many people in Britain are unduly worried about Britain's unemployment policy.
 - C The number of immigrants in the UK has steadily increased over the years.
 - D Xenophobic sentiments in Britain are justified in some instances only.
- 1p 24 What is presented in the paper published by the Institute for Public Policy Research (paragraph 5)?
- A A discussion of the increased percentage of jobs taken by people born outside the UK.
 - B An account of how the media interpret basic employment statistics.
 - C A quantitative survey of jobs taken by foreigners versus those taken by UK-born citizens.
 - D Conclusions from demographic and employment-related statistics.

- 1p 25 “Nor is the distinction a matter of pedantry.” (alinea 7)
Welk onderscheid wordt bedoeld?
- 2p 26 Geef van elk van de volgende beweringen aan of deze wel of niet in overeenstemming is met de inhoud van de alinea’s 8 en 9.
- 1 Last year more non-British than British citizens found new employment.
 - 2 A lot is unknown about the work done by immigrants.
 - 3 Migrants tend to go to where job prospects seem favourable.
 - 4 Immigrants are undemanding in their choice of employment.
- Noteer het nummer van elke bewering, gevolgd door “wel” of “niet”.
- 1p 27 Wat maakt “anecdotal evidence” (alinea 10) duidelijk met betrekking tot niet-Britse werknemers?
- “Shark attacks and ice-cream sales both rise in the summer.” (first sentence paragraph 11)
- 1p 28 What does the concluding paragraph focus on?
- A Phenomena such as unemployment and immigration generate prejudice and fear.
 - B There is no causal relationship between unemployment and immigration.
 - C Unemployment and immigration arise from similar circumstances.
 - D Unemployment does not influence immigration.

Bronvermelding

Een opsomming van de in dit examen gebruikte bronnen, zoals teksten en afbeeldingen, is te vinden in het bij dit examen behorende correctievoorschrift, dat na afloop van het examen wordt gepubliceerd.