

FAKE NEWS



Sir John Redwood

by **Ralph Berry**

Pretty much everything is fake news, one way or another, but the varieties are worth distinguishing. First, the 'news' is a vast displacement activity. Lately when I switched on the TV 'news' the first ten minutes were taken up with the drought. Well, lawks-a-mussie! Who'd have thought it? The entire nation has spent weeks experiencing drought and needs to be re-told the oft-told story.

TV fills up with shots of villages now emerging from the reservoirs that drowned them. Bridges stand over dried-up wadis where streams used to flow. This is entertaining, but 'news', no. We have to wait ten minutes before a semblance of real news can enter shyly on to the screen.

Then, 'news' which is merely the Government narrative. Ever

since the Tory leadership became a choice of two, with the postal vote of the party at large, we have known the result. All the polls, all the endorsements point one way. It's Liz, for Downing Street (probably No. 11, where the accommodation is more spacious than No. 10). Yet the pretence that a 'race' is on is the insistent news, accompanied by TV debates and hustings by the twin champions. It must be draining for Rishi Sunak, the destined loser, but he keeps up the pretence manfully. It will be a relief for him when he can stand down officially. He is indeed urged to do so now, but it would look bad so he stays.

However, some genuine news does indeed emerge from this palsied scene.

It comes from PRAVDA, the underground title for the *Telegraph*. That is because the *Telegraph* is the print organ that speaks for the Conservative Government in office. Print is more honest than TV—the *Telegraph*, for example, gives Zelensky a final -sky, while TV awards him two, -skyy, showing deep respect for Ukraine. On Sunday 23 July the *Telegraph* came up with hard news. A full-page photo of John Redwood came with two-columns of his views, and with this unassumingly worded sentence:

'Sir John is expected to be appointed as a Treasury minister in Ms Truss's government and is understood to have helped shape her thinking on economic issues during the campaign.'

This is dynamite. Redwood is the man who took up John Major's challenge and stood against him for the leadership in June 1995, with the campaign slogan: 'No change, no chance'. He lost because Michael Heseltine ordered 20 of his bravos to support Major, and he was rewarded with the Deputy Leadership. Major, spared by his own backbenchers, went on to lose by a terrifying margin to Tony Blair who won three consecutive elections. Jon Major resigned at once, and flounced off to watch cricket at the Oval. For John Redwood

there was no mercy, no forgiveness for being right. He had committed the ultimate sin of challenging the Leader—and the Establishment, as Nigel Farage often says, never forgets and never forgives. John Redwood is the longest head in the Conservative Party, but Government sent him into exile on the back benches and kept him there. Till now.

His daily DIARY in the *Telegraph*, now discontinued, has been essential reading and is a fountain of good sense. His great abilities—he is a Fellow of All Souls—are again at the service of the nation.

It is universally agreed that the British economy is in a horrible mess, but we stand a chance with real brains at the centre and two years to go before an election. That is real news. Liz Truss has chosen well.