mountain lion in effort to

establishes 'cosmic country

'You're a damn liar': Biden

lashes out at voter and

Has WhatsApp become a

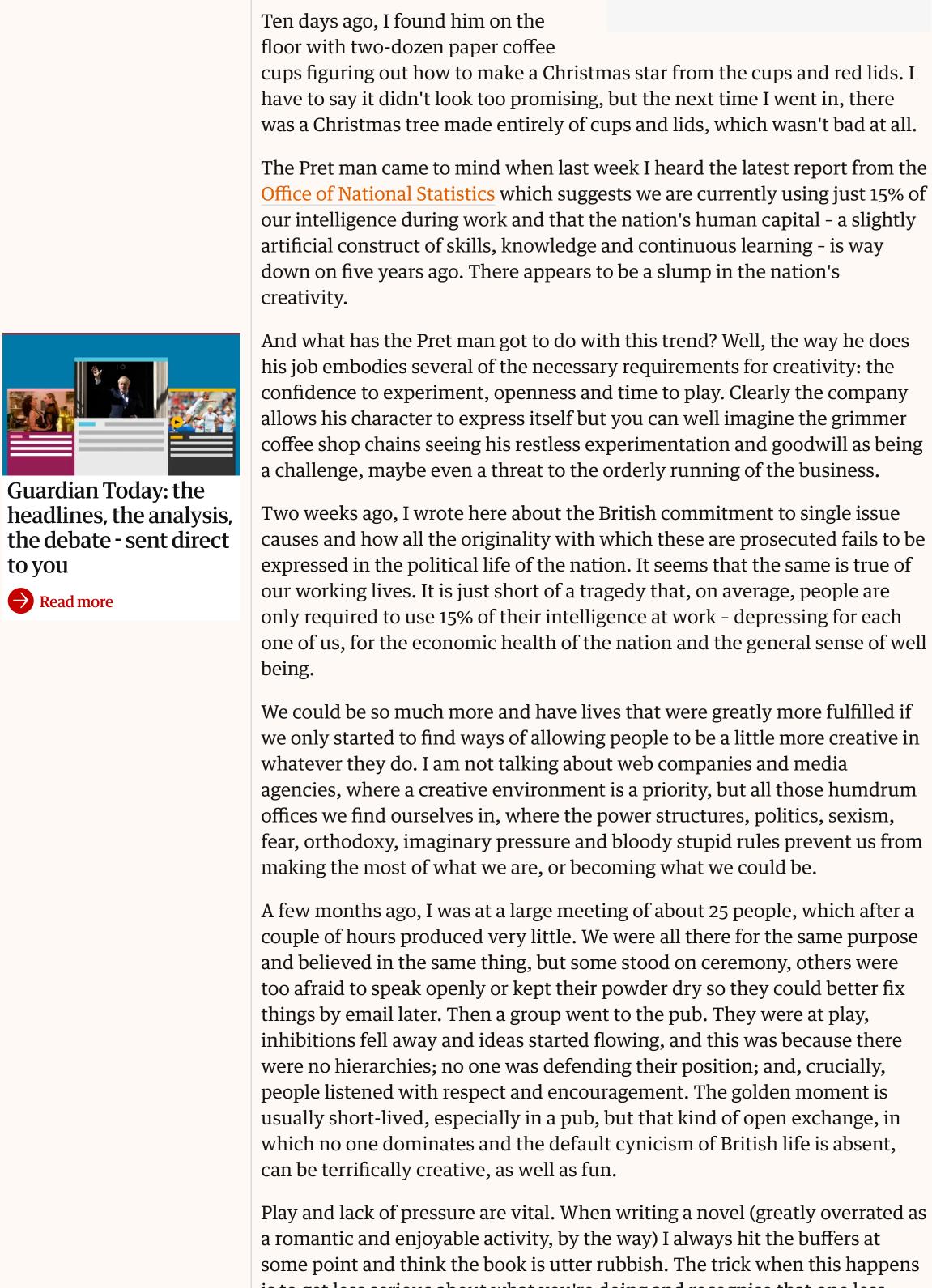
potential career assassin?

seems to call him fat

Fugitive Indian guru

save her dog

off Ecuador'



agency of a little good fortune.

The manager, who is not British

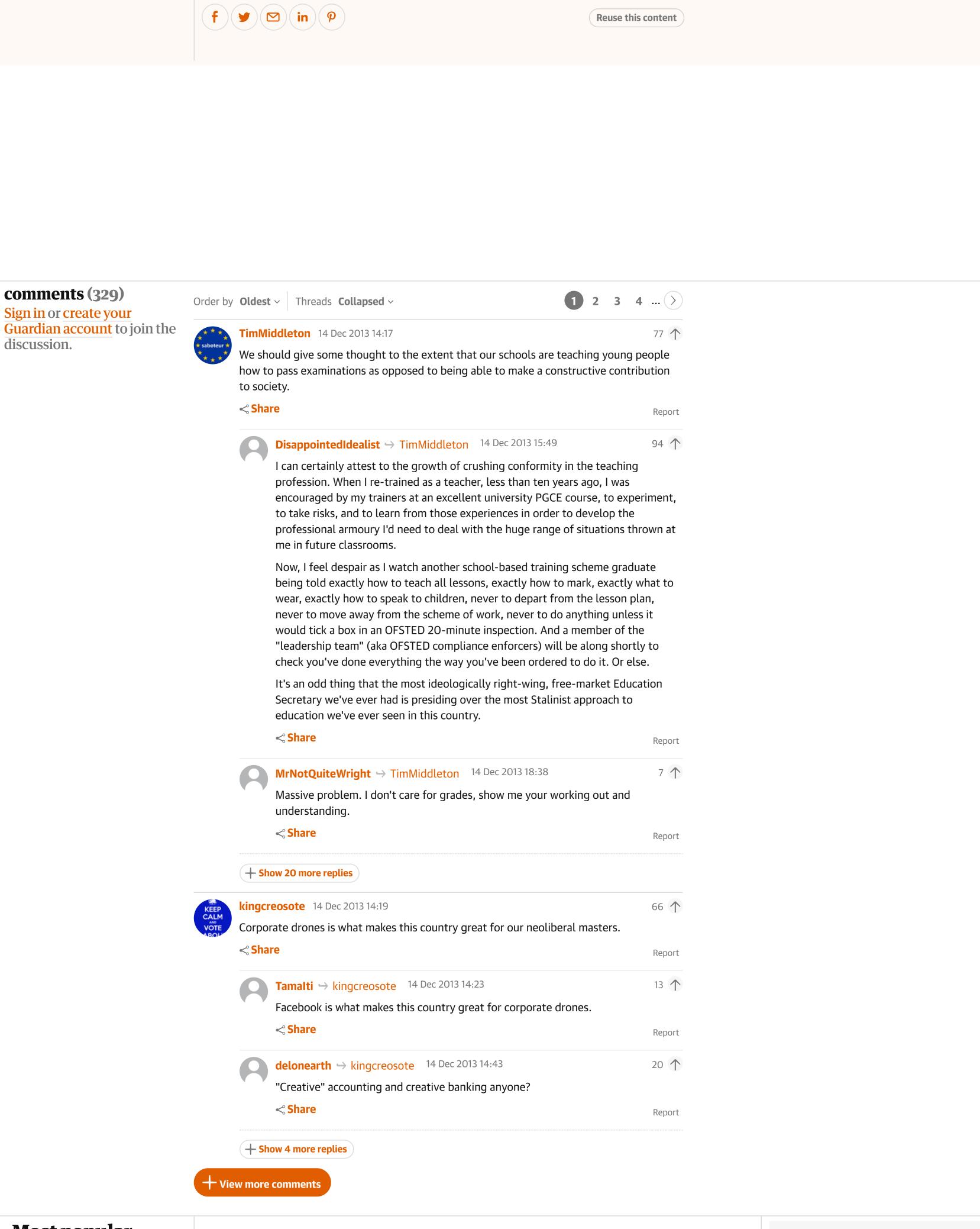
never rests.

However, this is not the whole point.

born, as you may have guessed from

his complete lack of embarrassment,

a challenge, maybe even a threat to the orderly running of the business. Two weeks ago, I wrote here about the British commitment to single issue causes and how all the originality with which these are prosecuted fails to be expressed in the political life of the nation. It seems that the same is true of our working lives. It is just short of a tragedy that, on average, people are only required to use 15% of their intelligence at work - depressing for each one of us, for the economic health of the nation and the general sense of well We could be so much more and have lives that were greatly more fulfilled if we only started to find ways of allowing people to be a little more creative in agencies, where a creative environment is a priority, but all those humdrum offices we find ourselves in, where the power structures, politics, sexism, fear, orthodoxy, imaginary pressure and bloody stupid rules prevent us from A few months ago, I was at a large meeting of about 25 people, which after a couple of hours produced very little. We were all there for the same purpose and believed in the same thing, but some stood on ceremony, others were too afraid to speak openly or kept their powder dry so they could better fix things by email later. Then a group went to the pub. They were at play, inhibitions fell away and ideas started flowing, and this was because there were no hierarchies; no one was defending their position; and, crucially, people listened with respect and encouragement. The golden moment is usually short-lived, especially in a pub, but that kind of open exchange, in which no one dominates and the default cynicism of British life is absent, Play and lack of pressure are vital. When writing a novel (greatly overrated as a romantic and enjoyable activity, by the way) I always hit the buffers at some point and think the book is utter rubbish. The trick when this happens is to get less serious about what you're doing and recognise that one less novel in the world is not going to make a heap of difference. You're there to have fun and you hope that will communicate itself to the reader. So you take your eye off the ball for a bit, go for a walk, see friends or simply play. I mess around with a couple of mechanical insects that I hope will one day mate and have babies. Richard Feynman, the charismatic physicist and one of the great teachers and thinkers of the past 100 years, gave his mind a rest from profound deliberation by life drawing, reading biology papers and playing the bongo drums. Sooner, rather than later, the subconscious, which has been left to get on with the problem in its own way, produces the thing that you want, or you didn't even know was there. And that applies to unpressured groups of people, who are at play but maybe also a little focused, and ingenuity wells up from the subconscious and people find themselves speaking the idea before they knew they'd had it - the idea that is born on the lips, as Pepys once said. There are countless inspiring videos about creativity on the web, like Elizabeth Gilbert's Ted talk of 2009 Sir Ken Robinson's of 2006 and the excellent lecture by John Cleese from 20 years ago. All of them come to the same conclusions about the importance of play, the absence of a fear of failure; openness and lack of pressure. I would add to these the quality that my friend and the founder of Charter 88 and openDemocracy Anthony Barnett emphasises: generosity of spirit. And that takes us back to the manager of Pret a Manger, who, I believe, would not be nearly as creative if he were not so generous and kind-hearted. Where does that leave us? Well, apart from encouraging the well-appreciated conditions for creativity in the workplace, we perhaps need to understand that the structures for taking decisions and driving things forward are not the same ones we should use to find innovation and make the most of the unexploited 85% of our intelligence. Power and hierarchies are the enemy of creativity. Since you're here... ... we have a small favour to ask. More people, like you, are reading and supporting the Guardian's independent, investigative journalism than ever before. 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