【4.16】

**4.16每日一篇 | 熊猫外刊精读**

Health **benefits**：Working it out  
   
Britain at last takes aim at worklessness. But **labour**'s other economic policies risk **undermining** its efforts  
   
【1】The **noblest** traditions of modern British **policymaking** were followed. First came **dithering**: worklessness from ill health rose **sharply** after the **pandemic**, but it was 18 months before Rishi Sunak’s government took a **stab** at **tightening** **benefits** in response. By then, around 1m people of working age had fallen out of the **labour** force since 2019, mostly because of **supposed** poor health. His changes ended up being blocked by the **courts**—the **consultation** was deemed **insufficiently** thorough—though not before a **looming** election gave an excuse for further **delay**. **labour** won, and chose to **procrastinate** with a new long-term target: to get the working-age **employment** rate to 80%, a level Britain has never hit.  
   
【2】Eventually, two things **concentrated** minds: a **genuine** need to make room for higher defence spending, and an **artificial** crisis. Rachel Reeves, the **chancellor**, had left too little **fiscal** **leeway** in her budget in October. What was **supposed** to be a **routine** economic-forecast update on March 26th has turned into a **scramble** for cash. Because Ms Reeves was in danger of **breaking** her self-**imposed** **fiscal** rules, finding money from welfare cuts suddenly became urgent. At last Britain decided to take a **proper** look at worklessness and the welfare system.Panda Foreign Magazine Intensive Reading:Respect for Originality, Piracy Must Be Punished  
   
【3】Better late than never. On March 18th Liz Kendall, the welfare **secretary**, announced **reforms** to **benefits** that she says will save £5bn ($6.5bn, 0.2% of GDP) annually by 2030 and get more Britons into work. That figure may gain a few **caveats** when the Office for Budget Responsibility, the **fiscal** watchdog, gives its own **assessment** later this month. Ms Kendall wants to reduce the **generosity** gap between health and non-health-related **benefits**, **tighten** **eligibility** and shift back towards the pre-**pandemic** **norm** of running assessments in person rather than over the phone. Alongside those cuts, Ms Kendall took **pains** to **emphasise**, would be £1bn extra to help pay for job-**seeking** support, and a **formal** “right to try”, to help **reassure** **claimants** that an unsuccessful go at working wouldn’t **punish** them.  
   
【4】All that adds up to a **sensible** package, and one that goes further than the previous government’s efforts. But though £5bn of savings is welcome, that is only a quarter of the £20bn rise in spending on those **benefits** that the government has forecast for the end of the decade. Such an increase is **alarming**, particularly since—with the exception of mental health—**surveys** **disagree** over whether Britons have actually grown **sicker** in the past few years. After the **fierce** and **protracted** battle within **labour** to **propose** even these **reforms**, Ms Reeves and Ms Kendall are unlikely to want to **revisit** the issue.  
   
【5】Unfortunately, they may have to. To see why, look at the **labour** market. One **troubling** **aspect** is that the recent rise in worklessness happened during an **exceptionally** strong jobs market. Unemployment hit a half-century low in 2022 and **vacancies** were the highest on record. But jobs are now harder to come by, and the **labour** market is **softening** fast. A **recession** could easily **exacerbate** the problem, and land another **cohort** on the sick rolls for good.Panda Foreign Magazine Intensive Reading:Respect for Originality, Piracy Must Be Punished  
   
【6】To make matters worse, much of the rest of **labour**’s economic agenda is **aimed** at squeezing out the lower-paid jobs that are most likely to suit someone with a thin work history and health problems. From April the rise in employers’ National Insurance and a higher minimum wage will lift the cost of hiring some of the lowest-paid workers by around 5%. That could encourage a shift to fewer but better-paid and more productive jobs. It is unlikely to help many of Britain’s workless find an **escape** route out of **benefits**.  
   
【7】In foreign policy, defence, infrastructure and more, Britain’s government has recently **acquired** an **admirable** sense of direction and clarity. But on worklessness, **labour**’s cross-cutting **instincts** have created a self-**defeating** **muddle**.

**①短语**

1. 原文：First came dithering: worklessness from ill health rose sharply after the pandemic, but it was 18 months before Rishi Sunak’s government took a stab at tightening benefits in response.

词典：take a stab at 尝试；试图

例句：He took a stab at fixing the broken faucet, but didn't succeed.

他尝试修理坏掉的水龙头，但没有成功。

1. 原文：By then, around 1m people of working age had fallen out of the labour force since 2019, mostly because of supposed poor health.

词典：fall out of 从…… 中退出；不再参与；失去

例句：Many small businesses fell out of the market during the economic crisis.

许多小企业在经济危机期间退出了市场。

1. 原文：Eventually, two things concentrated minds: a genuine need to make room for higher defence spending, and an artificial crisis.

词典：make room for 为…… 腾出空间；给…… 让路

例句：We need to make room for new ideas in this project.

我们需要在这个项目中为新想法留出空间。

1. 原文：Better late than never. On March 18th Liz Kendall, the welfare secretary, announced reforms to benefits...

词典：better late than never 迟做总比不做好

例句：He finally started working on his assignment. Well, better late than never.

他最终开始做作业了。嗯，迟做总比不做好。

1. 原文：Alongside those cuts, Ms Kendall took pains to emphasise, would be £1bn extra to help pay for job-seeking support...

词典：take pains to emphasise 努力强调；煞费苦心地强调

例句：The teacher took pains to emphasise the importance of following the rules.

老师努力强调遵守规则的重要性。

1. 原文：All that adds up to a sensible package, and one that goes further than the previous government’s efforts.

词典：add up to 总计达；意味着；归结为

例句：These small savings add up to a significant amount over time.

随着时间的推移，这些小额储蓄累计起来是一笔可观的数目。

1. 原文：Such an increase is alarming, particularly since—with the exception of mental health—surveys disagree over whether Britons have actually grown sicker in the past few years.

词典：with the exception of 除…… 之外

例句：All the students passed the exam with the exception of Tom.

除了汤姆，所有学生都通过了考试。

1. 原文：But jobs are now harder to come by, and the labour market is softening fast.

词典：come by 得到；获得；找到

例句：Good jobs are not easy to come by these days.

如今好工作不容易找到。

**②长难句**

原文：Because Ms Reeves was in danger of breaking her self - imposed fiscal rules, finding money from welfare cuts suddenly became urgent.

分析：“Because Ms Reeves was in danger of breaking her self - imposed fiscal rules”为原因状语从句，阐述事件发生的原因，表明里夫斯女士面临违反自己设定的财政规则的风险，“finding money from welfare cuts”为动名词短语，作句子的主语，“became”为系动词，“urgent”为表语，说明从削减福利中筹集资金这一行为变得紧迫。

译文：由于里夫斯可能违反自行设定的财政规则，通过削减福利筹措资金突然变得刻不容缓。

原文：To make matters worse, much of the rest of Labour’s economic agenda is aimed at squeezing out the lower - paid jobs that are most likely to suit someone with a thin work history and health problems.

分析：“To make matters worse”为插入语，起到递进说明，让情况描述更深入的作用。“much of the rest of Labour’s economic agenda”是句子主语，“is aimed at”为谓语，“squeezing out the lower - paid jobs”是动名词短语作介词at的宾语。“that are most likely to suit someone with a thin work history and health problems”是定语从句，修饰先行词 “the lower - paid jobs”，说明这些低薪工作的特点。

译文：雪上加霜的是，工党经济议程的其余部分大多旨在挤压低薪岗位，而这些岗位恰恰最适合工作履历薄弱且健康状况不佳的人群。

**③写作技巧**

原文：First came dithering: worklessness from ill health rose sharply after the pandemic, but it was 18 months before Rishi Sunak’s government took a stab at tightening benefits in response.

首先是举棋不定：疫情后因健康问题导致的失业人数激增，但苏纳克政府在18个月后才着手收紧福利政策作为应对。

“take a stab at” 意思是 “尝试；试图”，该短语以一种较为口语化且生动的方式表达了对某件事情进行尝试的动作。在写作中，使用 “take a stab at” 比单纯的 “try” 更具表现力，能让读者感受到尝试行为可能带有一定的不确定性或冒险性。与之类似的替换表达有 “have a go at”“make an attempt at”“give it a shot” 等。

例句：

He decided to have a go at writing a novel after years of reading.

经过多年的阅读后，他决定尝试写一部小说。

She made an attempt at solving the complex math problem but failed.

她试图解决这道复杂的数学题，但失败了。

Why don't you give it a shot and see if you like this new sport?

你为什么不尝试一下，看看是否喜欢这项新运动呢？

**④背景知识**

国民保险税（National Insurance）：在英国，国民保险税是一种社会保障性质的税费。雇主需要为雇佣的员工缴纳这一税费，其征收旨在为诸如国家养老金、失业津贴等社会保障项目筹集资金。文章提到，自 4 月起，雇主国民保险税上调，这使得雇佣部分低收入员工的成本增加约 5%，进而对英国的就业结构和雇佣市场产生影响，也体现出这一税种的调整与英国劳动力市场、就业政策之间存在紧密联系。

预算责任办公室（Office for Budget Responsibility）：作为英国的财政监督机构，预算责任办公室负责对政府的财政计划、经济预测进行独立评估。在文章里，福利大臣利兹・肯德尔宣布的福利改革，预计到 2030 年每年节省 50 亿英镑，而该办公室会在本月晚些时候给出自己的评估，其评估结果可能为改革目标的达成附加条件，凸显了它在英国财政政策制定和评估过程中发挥的关键作用。

**⑤段落大意**

【1】决策拖沓：疫情后英国失业人数激增，政府政策推进迟缓且受阻

【2】危机倒逼：需增国防开支、面临财政危机，促使政府正视失业问题

【3】改革举措：福利大臣宣布福利改革，拟节省开支并助力民众就业

【4】成效局限：改革方案合理但节支有限，工党内部改革阻力较大

【5】市场隐忧：就业市场由盛转衰，经济衰退或加剧失业问题

【6】政策矛盾：工党部分经济议程挤压低薪岗位，不利于解决失业

【7】整体失衡：英国在多领域方向明确，但失业问题政策出现乱局