

Then there were four

Yesterday little new light was shed on the leadership battles by the hustings and other events. It was good that the last tv debate was cancelled. All candidates realised that the format of the C4 and ITV debates were designed to encourage blue on blue rows of a kind which the Opposition will savour and requote and there was no need to help them some more. It is best if the tough debates for the MP part of the contest take place behind closed doors where MPs can ask difficult questions and make unhelpful observations without broadcasting to the Opposition. When it comes to two candidates before the membership there is more of a role for broadcast media, though it would be sensible to favour GB News, Talk tv, LBC and other channels that allow Conservatives to put our case rather than feeding the ratings of channels that try to keep decent Conservative views off their airwaves by exaggeration, twisting, character misrepresentation and interruptions.

As expected Tom Tugendhat dropped out. Today we will go down to three and tomorrow complete the task of choosing the final two. It seems likely the issue to settle is which candidate will take on Rishi in the country? This is a battle over future economic policy, and over whether it is possible to live the Conservative brand of lower taxes, faster growth, more private sector led jobs and investment. Only Rishi is defending an unchanged economic policy based on adding large tax rises to the monetary and cost of living squeezes we already face.