

It's been an embarrassing and frankly frightening few days in politics.

First there is Robert Kilroy-Silk's unseemly bid for the leadership of UKIP. He doesn't seem to care about the impression it gives of the party, just so long as he gets more attention. UKIP is learning that the only thing that matters to Kilroy-Silk is Kilroy-Silk, but then they would have known that if they had watched his awful programme. It wasn't about the people who bared their souls in the name of ratings. The opening credits revealed that: shot after shot of Kilroy in various poses, sometimes looking thoughtful, sometimes amused, but always self-centred and slightly luminous.

I work from home and people often say to me that I must be very disciplined to do so, but nothing would get me away from the TV and to my desk faster than Kilroy's arrival after breakfast TV.

Still UKIP gets what it deserves for stirring up fear over immigrants. Economic migrants are usually enterprising, driven people. We need them to supplement our shrinking workforce, although the countries they have left desperately need their skills too and we should be able to sort out our own employment problems.

Further cringes came with the opening of the Tory party conference yesterday by chairman Liam Fox. His speech lacked conviction and seemed written to push as many of the traditional Tory buttons as possible, even if he couldn't always back up his assertions. On political correctness, he said: "If a husband kills his wife at home, we call it 'murder'," he said defiantly. Well, don't we all? Next came immigration and crime and dutifully the audience clapped some of the right places, but it looked as if their minds were really on lunch.

US politics is far more interesting - and scary. In the presidential debate, George Bush was worse than I feared, like a lobotomized John Wayne. He stumbled for answers and was almost incoherent on some replies. He shouldn't be in charge of a shopping trolley, let alone the most powerful arsenal on the planet. But John Kerry put in a better performance than I dared hope and maybe we'll get a new thumb on the nuclear button.

Leicester councilors had an important debate last night: the application by Leicester Rugby Club and developers Maple Oak to build at Granby Halls. The architects have managed to recreate just the sort of bleak, ugly buildings that are being demolished in other parts of the conurbation, and this application threatens the work that is being done to turn Leicester around and it has been hard work.

Leicester doesn't have the cosiness and accessibility of a town, but neither does it have the imposing centerpiece squares or monuments of a city. It does have some fine buildings - e.g. the station, but you have to admire it across a dual carriageway.

Leicester Regeneration Company and its partners have come up with some great ideas for making Leicester look the part and this mustn't be undermined by buildings that look like upended bricks with windows.