

system. It would probably be illegal under anti-discrimination law. But Mr Hunt's premise, and hence the Tory analysis, is just wrong. The real bias at broadcasters is not against the Conservatives, but the Liberal Democrats.

The evidence of such bias is compelling and persistent. Broadcasters repeatedly ignore a third view on matters of the day. Even where Labour and Conservative views are nearly identical – such as on crime, Afghanistan or Iraq – news organisations evidently feel they can eliminate the Liberal Democrat viewpoint in the interests of simple, adversarial debate. The idea that there might be more than two points of

view is not a radical or Liverpool when they have not been able to elect an MP or a councillor for many years?

Yet the broadcasters still try to shoehorn us into a two-party debate. I recently presented the evidence for the broadcasters' systematic bias at one of David Butler's Nuffield College seminars. It comes in one simple form. In every election campaign since 1979 with one exception, the Liberal Democrats' share of the vote has gone up.

The increase comparing the average of the opinion polls in the month before the campaign and the final result is 3.9 percentage points, a large rise in electoral terms. According to UK Polling

The sharp-eyed will spot that I excluded one election – 1987 – from the calculation. During that campaign, support for the SDP-Liberal Alliance declined, but for an exceptional reason. The Alliance had two leaders who disagreed about nuclear weapons in the middle of the campaign. We have not made the mistake of having two leaders since.

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The writer is Liberal Democrat shadow Home Secretary

Younger men aren't worth it



Helen Croydon

I WATCHED GMTV last week in utter bewilderment when the presenter cheerfully introduced a story on the growing number of so-called "cougars" – women over 40 looking to date a man at least eight years her junior. Sofa guest, Rita Sangha, 39, whose recent, more able-bodied beaux include a 17-year-old, runs Cougar Camp, giving advice and encouragement to women looking to attract young blood.

It was not so much the concept, but the gung-ho enthusiasm with which it was introduced. The message seemed to be: "Wake up, women, this is the latest fun activity to boost your post-divorce ego." It came without any health warning on some of the possible effects a bold and experienced woman

may have on the less emotionally developed mind of a younger man.

The presenter asked whether this is about the pursuit of fun or love and Sangha declared it is both. But I doubt if the eager, unscarred heart of a young male – refreshing as that may be – is able to make the distinction as ruthlessly as an elder date.

This was no isolated case. On research it seems it is very trendy to be an aspiring cougar. There are dating websites for them, books on them and this weekend one Sunday newspaper published not one, but four heated letters on the topic. Last month saw the launch of a new American comedy TV show, *Cougar Town*, starring Courtney Cox as a divorced woman re-entering a dating scene filled with younger men.

Not to forget a host of celebrities. Kim Cattrall, 53, dated her 20-years-younger chef boyfriend for several years. Madonna, 51, appears enamoured by Jesus Luz, a 23-year-old Dolce & Gabbana model, and Demi Moore, 46,

is married to spring-chicken Ashton Kutcher, 31.

Who cares, you may cry. Women should be embracing their sexuality in defiance of grey hair and gravity. They should be fighting back over an ageist, youth-obsessed society. Indeed they should, but any relationship should be born via natural causes and based on a genuine connection. A workshop teaching women to force their pheromones on to the younger male seems predatory.

Nor should any relationship serve as a sidekick to boost either partner's ego. I imagine if a man were to set up a workshop giving pointers to middle-aged males on how to woo a younger girl, there would be a great deal of feminist

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outcry. But we seem to be in an era where anything that empowers a woman is an unquestionable victory for women's lib.

More to the point, though, why on earth would any woman want to date a younger man? Their lack of savoir-faire is terribly off-putting. They don't have a penny to rub together and their idea of haute cuisine is a two-for-one deal at Pizza Express and a bottle of Jacob's Creek. To keep in touch with them, you would need a log-in with Twitter, various instant-messenger accounts and Skype – whatever that is. If you went on holiday, all your snaps would end up on Facebook and if you "stayed over at his", you would have to join a queue of 15 flatmates to use the bathroom in the morning.

My experience of younger men has found them to be incurably addicted to unrealistic romance. It's quaint, but it isn't sexy. If I wanted the doe-eyed affections of a younger man I would get myself a puppy. No thanks, I'd much prefer a seasoned panther.

land mines, aerials and watchtowers and girded with layers of barbed wire, is the still temporary solution to a war that is even now not officially over.

Yet, as the world agonises about the mortal threat from a nuclear-armed North Korea, Seoul gives every impression of turning the other way. The DMZ, where there has been no fatality for more than 20 years, has become a nice little earner for the city's tour companies, who take daily bus-loads of the curious into the frozen heart of Asia's cold war.

As you near the border, you can contrast the forested hills of the South with the bare hills of the North – where they are said to have cut down the trees for fuel or food. In the DMZ, all the paraphernalia of imminent armed confrontation is there. US and South Korean troops patrol. To be admitted, you must sign away liability for your death or injury; then you can gaze across the demarcation line, watching Them tracking You.

But for all the 007 drama, the hair-trigger tension I sensed to the very end in cold-war Berlin is almost not there. The building that straddles the border, equipped for peace talks that have still not been consummated, feels less like a war zone and more like the railway carriage in the woods at Compiègne where the First World War armistice was signed.

Only outside the DMZ, in a bizarre amusement park, do you start to glimpse the human side. A bullet-ridden railway engine, caught in the last of the hostilities in 1953, was installed – recently – as a relic, while the lower branches of trees are festooned with ribbons inscribed by those hoping to be reunited with relatives in the North. Oh yes, and when you leave the DMZ, the duty soldier gives you back your signed liability form, as a grim souvenir.

A man of 28 letters

AN ENORMOUS statue has just been unveiled in the centre of the city. You might think, given the division of Korea, the living memory of war and the proximity of the nuclear-aspiring North, that it would be a

warrior. Not at all. It depicts King Sejong (1397-1450), whose claim to immortality is that he devised the Korean alphabet, and he is holding not a

weapon, but a book. The King, it is said, wanted to make it easier for his fellow countrymen to read and write, so he replaced the Chinese system of ideograms with the ingenious, and unique, 28-letter alphabet, that is used to this day.

