

Despotic green policies lead to impoverishment and unemployment

By Conrad Black

As many have predicted, including in this column, the economic terrorism of government green extremists in one country after another has succeeded in splitting their left-wing constituencies by alienating practically the entire working class and huge numbers of other consumers, especially those of middle or modest means, by the economic punishment that the majority of individuals and families suffer as the green despotism intensifies. This process sharply separates those theoretical dogmatists who were prepared to sacrifice practically unlimited amounts of the financial security and disposable income of others in exchange for a reduction of carbon emissions in the overconfident belief that they are somehow making a contribution to the salvation of our planet, from those who have to foot the bill for this ecological wild goose chase. All sane people dislike the pollution of the air and water and soil but that is the issue: to find the most practical midpoint between reducing environmental pollution to a viable minimum, without inflicting unsustainable or unnecessary economic damage on any segment of society.

The government of Germany severely trespassed into the unjustifiable when it shut down the country's advanced nuclear programme. Further public ruminations about such insane and despotic measures as banning weekend pleasure automobile trips have been bandied about in Germany, which despite its great importance and success remains over-accommodating of ideas of public regimentation that would not be entertained in most other Western countries.

The latest manifestation of this commendable hostility to excessive climate change zeal has come from leaders of the British labour movement. Gary Smith, leader of the GMB Union, Britain's largest labour confederation with over 500,000 members, last month denounced net zero policies for "hollowing out working class communities." This came after Tata Steel announced 2,500 permanent layoffs following the closing of the last remaining blast furnaces in the United Kingdom. This will make the UK the only major industrialised economy in the world without any capacity to produce virgin steel, which is critical for defence and other highly-refined industrial uses. The UK retains electric arc furnaces that produce recycled steel with much less employment and a limited range of steel grades.



Tata Steel Wales, destroyed by green policy: save our steel, save our towns, save our people. (Photo by Christopher Furlong/Getty Images)

Smith told the BBC that the previous Conservative government, which ideologically was far from conservative in most respects, started this problem with its pell-mell copycat environmental extremism, but he severely chastised the new Labour government for accelerating the enactment of these self-defeating policies. The Unite union also attacked the new

government's net zero policies. Its leader, Sharon Graham, expressed incredulity at the government's promise of a "just transition," and said that "30,000 workers in the North Sea are on a jobs cliff-edge... Unite will not stand by and watch those workers becoming the miners of our generation." Concerns have also been responsibly expressed about steadily-rising UK industrial electricity prices as a result of wind farms and other innovations and it may be that the planned arc furnaces are already "dead in the water." This is a shocking condition for the country that launched the industrial revolution 200 years ago and whose talent for manufacturing and worldwide export of industrial goods led the world for many years.

Similar problems are arising in practically all sophisticated industrial economies. The middle- and working-class consumers and employed people have the demographic strength to decide elections in all of our advanced Western countries, and they are steadily being unified in angry scepticism at the impact of radical climate change countermeasures.

When the international Left was defeated in the Cold War, it spontaneously scrambled aboard the ecological and conservation bandwagon and attacked capitalism from the new angle of saving the planet. Authentic and traditional conservationists were shouldered aside in favour of militants who propagated arguments that would justify an extreme assault on the profitability of industrial capitalism. So well-coordinated was this endeavour and so impeccable was the objective of reducing environmental pollution that the fact that the climate change argument is unsubstantiated – that nothing has happened outside normal cyclical climate changes and almost nothing is known about the extent or direction of climate change or whether man has anything to do with the cause of it, has been lost in technical and speculative argument. The deciding vote will be cast in accord with the economic self-interest of the working and middle classes and their right not to be oppressed, and to impose policy corrections on or remove

from office those who are endangering their welfare.

Historians of the future will be astounded that the advanced Western nations have impoverished such a large socioeconomic echelon of their populations to facilitate the exportation of unemployment to our own shores from the chief environmental offending countries, China and India, and that we have transformed our most valuable assets, energy of all kinds and other natural resources including base and precious metals and forest products, into a liability and an embarrassment. It will be one of the finest hours in the chequered history of organised labour to help lead our societies out of this insanity and the process is well underway in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and elsewhere. It is an irresistible and welcome wave of rational self-interest. "*Cherchez l'interet,*" say the French.

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