

British Greens are even nuttier than ours

By Hal GP Colebatch, The Australian, 28 January 2015.

I THOUGHT the Australian Greens were daft until I saw the policy of the British Greens, which makes Karl Marx look almost sane and benevolent. Reading the policy, one feels *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has met one of the darker passages from *The Lord of the Rings*. The truly horrifying thing is that the British Greens might pick up seats in Westminster at the imminent general election, or even hold the balance of power. Polling 11 per cent, they are set to overtake the Liberal Democrats and the UK Independence Party.

It is baffling that this fundamentally irrational party should have attracted such a surge of support. Much of the Greens' manifesto is starkly unbelievable.

Even communism didn't advocate this

How's this for starters: zero, or preferably negative, economic growth and falling levels of personal consumption to be enforced by the state. Even communism didn't advocate this: its quarrel with capitalism was about the best means of achieving growth.

The policy aims for all energy to be supplied from renewable sources by 2030, with wind the main source of power. As a science-fiction writer I object to this trespassing on my territory.

Under new transport priorities, pedestrians and bikes will come first. Buses and trains will be electric by 2030, while taxes and regulations will force people to buy less-powerful cars. No new airports or runways will be built and existing ones will be nationalised. All new homes and businesses will, by law, provide bicycle parking. Helicopter travel will be regulated "more strictly".

Advertising of holiday flights will be controlled by the state to halt the "promotion of a high-carbon lifestyle". New taxes would be imposed on carriers.

Britain forced into permanent recession

Britain would be forced into permanent recession; families would become materially poorer each year. The Greens want to see greater national self-reliance, presumably like North Korea.

No more nonsense about international trade promoting not only mutual prosperity but also peace. Import taxes will be levied reflecting the "ecological impact" of imported goods; reintroduced tariffs would end the free-trade bloc, the EU's greatest achievement.

Britain's armed forces abolished

On peace the Greens really go to town. They want Britain's armed forces to eventually be abolished, because Britain has not been in danger of invasion since 1941. Britain will leave NATO and end the US alliance, and its military bases and training areas will be converted into nature reserves. No more nonsense about intervening to get rid of foreign tyrants or to protect civilian populations from massacre.

While it may not be possible to scrap all the armed forces at once, “outside times of conflict, all military decisions and expenditure will be available for scrutiny by parliament and the public”; nothing like letting potential enemies know the details of your equipment and order of battle. With defence forces scrapped, Britain’s ability to provide disaster relief would also disappear.

The Greens’ substitutes for defence forces include “town twinning”. What a pity the Foreign Office did not think of twinning London with Berlin in 1939.

Defence forces would be replaced by “exchange visits and internet-based methods for learning about other countries and cultures by direct contact” (but not, apparently, by trading with them). Shades of novelist Ian Hay’s politician who “worked to promote understanding between nations that understood each other only too well already”.

UN provides support for law and order systems

And, “The UN should provide significant support for building effective law and order systems that are not affected by corruption ...” But then, there would not be much point in having defence forces without all those dark satanic steel mills and mines.

The Greens argue that government policy should make paid work “less necessary”, with people making their living from something called the home-based “informal economy”.

Fiscal policy is at least as crazy as the non-defence policy. There is to be an unconditional, non-withdrawable income of £71 (\$135) a week for everyone living in Britain “as a right of citizenship”, non-means-tested and regardless of whether they are seeking work.

No one will see a reduction in benefits

The taxpayer will top up rents and mortgages. No one will see a reduction in benefits, and most will see a substantial increase. Parents will be entitled to two years’ paid parental leave from work.

The Greens will let people “choose their own types and patterns of work” and to take up “personally satisfying and socially useful work”. This is a pinch from one of Marx’s silliest passages describing the perfect state under communism.

And don’t think this hasn’t been costed out. Without all that money wasted on national defence, new expenditure would come to a mere \$500 billion or so a year — more than double the current health budget, and about 10 times the current defence budget. Foreign aid would be nearly doubled to 1 per cent of gross domestic product. (Unfortunately, 1 per cent of GDP under the Greens might not buy some Bangladeshi farmer much more than a nice big cup of coffee.)

A tax on presents

There will also be a tax on presents, which should help cover any fiscal shortfall nicely, “to prevent the accumulation of wealth and power by a privileged class”. Not that it sounds like there is going to be much wealth and power to tax.

Merely being a member of al-Qa'ida, the IRA and other currently proscribed terrorist groups will no longer be an offence under Green plans. A Green government should seek to “address desperate motivations that lie behind many atrocities labelled ‘terrorist’ ”. Terrorism, it adds, “is an extremely loaded term. Sometimes governments justify their own terrorist acts by labelling any groups that resist their monopoly of violence ‘terrorist’.”

Taxes will be raised on alcohol and tobacco, with bans on advertising alcohol and the sale of fur, and an Orwellian campaign will be launched against eating meat. Factory farming will be banned as well as shooting.

However, prostitution, cannabis use, abortion on request and euthanasia will all be legalised (but no fur coats for prostitutes, presumably).

Hal GP Colebatch was the winner of the Prime Minister's Literary Award for history for 2014 for Australia's Secret War: How Unionists Sabotaged Our Troops in World War II (Quadrant Books)