

Climate change and the 'left'. By Andrew Montford (Bishop Hill). 30 November 2014.

This comment on why the left has fallen head over heels in love with global warming ideology was left on the discussion board by Lord Donoughue. I thought it worth of promotion to a full post.

The issue of why the political left is overwhelmingly supportive of the climate change alarmist ideology/faith, and hence there are relatively few left wing sceptics, is quite complex and would take more space and time than I intend to impose on you here. But may I, as a lifelong Labour supporter, offer a couple of broad observations. They are by no means comprehensive and omit many nuances. But they are major general factors which I have observed in the party for 61 years, and in Parliament for almost 30 years.

First is that most leftish British people get politically involved because they genuinely believe they wish to contribute to the common good in our society. (They tend to believe, rightly or wrongly, that the right wing wishes to contribute to their own individual or class good). At first this drew many to sympathise with Marxist ideology, until the Soviets discredited that. More sympathised and many still do with the social democratic ideals of equality and civil liberty, though that position lacks the ideological certainties and claimed scientific basis of old Marxism. With the collapse of Marxism, there was created a vacuum on the left. Those seeking an ideological faith to cling on to for moral certainty, felt bereft. They also wanted a faith which again gave them a feeling of still pursuing the common good of society, especially the new global society, and even more a feeling of moral superiority, which is a characteristic of many middle and professional types on the left. Climate change and the moral common good of saving the planet, with its claimed scientific certainties, offered to fill the vacuum. It may or may not be a coincidence that the climate change faith gained momentum in the 1990s immediately after Marxism collapsed with the Berlin Wall.

I notice that my Labour colleagues who are troubled by the cost of the war on climate change, and especially when I point out that its costs fall heavily on the poorer classes, while its financial benefits go to rich landowners and individuals on the Climate Change Committee, still won't face those facts because they want to cling on to the new climate faith because they want to believe it is in the common good. They are not bad or stupid people. Many are better and cleverer than me. But they have a need for a faith which they believe is for the global good. They don't want a moral vacuum. And the current leaders of the social democratic parties in Britain and Europe are not offering them much else. For Ed Miliband, who is not a bad or stupid man, but coming from a Marxist heritage, when asked for more vision, he grasps climate change like a drowning man clasping a lifebelt.

While this need persists and there persists the misconception that the Green faith is somehow leftish and in pursuit of the common good, then most on the political left will stay with it. To shake them it will be necessary to show them that the costs of implementing climate alarmism will actually destroy the economic hopes of the poor and is often a cynical device to enrich the wealthy. That it enables self righteous middle class posturers to parade their assumed moral superiority at the expense of the poor. And that its so-called scientific certainties are very uncertain indeed. It is also necessary for the sceptical and realistic side to show more publicly

that they accept the proven aspects of climate change (which every sceptic I know does) and care about the genuine concerns of the environment (which the Greens ignore by littering our landscapes with inefficient and costly windmills.)

My second point concerns the Stalinist tactics of the Green activists in trying to suppress any questioning of their dogmatic faith and to damage the lives and careers of any professional person who attempts to examine this subject in an honest way which might undermine their dogmatic claims. Their use of Holocaust language such as 'Denier', implying their target is akin to a neo Nazi, is but one example of the Stalinist mentality. In that political context, where any questioner is so derided, it is no surprise that most Labour supporters choose not to take the risk - especially when it immediately throws them into confrontation with their embattled leader.

Sorry to go on so long. But they are my observational conclusions on why it is not easy for the sceptical side to make progress on the political left. Interestingly, polls suggest it is among Labour working classes, always more practical than our Hampstead/Guardian types, that there is the biggest dissent from the Green religion - and some of them are already slipping off to UKIP, which shows more concern for their suffering under the Green taxes.

This battle to bring understanding to Labour that its climate policies punish its core supporters, will take a while to win, partly for the two reasons I offer above.