

In 2017 we will have to remember that next they will co...

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We know more about what 2017 will be like than we did 2016.

I'm not suggesting clairvoyance. What I am suggesting is that a year ago we did not know that the world was about to become quite as unpleasant as transpired.

Admittedly I wrote a blog a year ago expressing a concern for democracy. But I was not alone in missing the trend that was to develop. The obvious symbols are Brexit and Trump, but they are symbols. The reality is that what I did not anticipate was the rise of the Alt-Right. As the [FT puts it](#), the Alt-Right is made up of white nationalist groups that reject elements of mainstream conservatism.

These groups are obvious in the States, as is their power now Trump is in office.

In the UK UKIP still tries to play the type of respectability that seeks to disguise its links with such thinking. Increasingly it is failing to do so. This is why Justin Welby was right to say yesterday that:

The end of 2016 finds us all in a different kind of world, one less predictable and certain, which feels more awash with fear and division. That uncertainty of our world, our feelings tells us that our values are in the wrong place.

This fear, and this division, is deliberately created. At present UKIP can't even stop it destroying itself. But as the acceptability amongst some of expressing Alt-Right opinions grows, and I sense that it is (as Farage's own contemptuous dismissal of the Archbishop's Christmas message indicated), so will its potential cohesion and power.

In 2017 we know we face the Alt-Right. We know it is real. We know it can be deeply threatening, even when its spokespeople deny that. Millions who are not sure of their welcome in this country now are evidence of that. We know some of its supporters, even if thankfully still way out on its own fringes, can be profoundly violent. And we know that fear can suppress political processes.

In 2017 we need to recognise that there are those who seek to divide the country on

itself and who will use whatever methods they can to achieve this goal. And we know there are those in the media who will support them. We know too that Brexit gives them a chance to do that they did not have before.

I am not saying for a moment that politics should not discuss difficult issues, including immigration and sensitive areas of foreign policy. By necessity politics has to do such things, and its failure to do so in the past may have helped the current issues develop. But in 2017 there is a challenge to the majority who believe that there is a need to stand up for respect for all those who make up this diverse country. What we have to say is that we respect our differences and embrace them as they make us stronger.

Even, and perhaps especially, those who think we are in this country finite in our capacity to accommodate more people must be clear that this is not an issue where race, gender, ethnicity or national origin must be used to discriminate against those who are here. And it is likewise necessary that we realise that whilst we might be an island we are not in any way separated from the rest of the world: people from the UK wish to live and work elsewhere and we should support their right to do so. That requires that we welcome others to this country.

For this with broad minds 2017 will be testing. Time and again we will have to stand up and say that although we have always controlled migration (and we have) we have always sought to do so sensitively, and this is not the time to change that, just as this will not be the moment to threaten anyone who lives in this country. That is our duty.

Or remember, next they will come for you.