

# Unless the left sorts out its economic thinking we're s...

Published: January 12, 2026, 11:06 pm

---

These are not normal times. Donald Trump has acted contrary to international refugee law. At the same time he has created a whole new category of refugees - people who are resident in the US and who have now been declined the right to return to their homes. And he did all this days after announcing his plan to withdraw from critical UN work on refugees and other vital issues.

Theresa May has refused to condemn his actions. Instead she sold arms to the regime guilty of jailing more journalists than any other in the world.

I am under no illusion that there were no problems in the world before these events happened. But the world is much worse for them. And although I know there are those who will celebrate these actions it's my belief that this is not a majority. We know, for example, that evidence shows that in the States most people are considerably more sympathetic to the Democrats social policies than the Republicans. But Trump won. In the UK there is broadly similar evidence. Looking at many issues people are more socially liberal than their voting patterns suggest, whatever Brexit might imply.

In that case what is happening can only be indication of conflict to come. May's tolerance of Trump will repulse many. It is clear Trump is revolting many in his own country. But why is it then that they retain electoral appeal? However repulsive May's choice of new trading partners I am not expecting her poll popularity to plummet as yet. So why not? There are at least three reasons.

One, of course, is self interest. There are far too many who turn blind eyes in this world and will do until such time as they realise they are compromised beyond hope of redemption.

Second, there is the inability of opposition parties. This is obvious in both the US and UK. The issue is deeper than that of leadership though. The malaise is more profound: it is a lack of confidence that pervades all it does. However confident the opposition's social liberalism it has forgotten its economic *raison d'être*. Once it knew most history was written by the winners and had the courage to challenge their narratives. Now

though it has succumbed to an economic narrative that ensures the winners perpetuate their gains. The opposition has no purpose as a result.

Third, this clearly indicates the third issue, which is that people now realise that the left has no coherent economic explanation of what it might do for the 'left behind'. These are now the majority of people. In that case they have no reason to doubt the economic narrative of the right, which has both the appearance of coherence and the support of those who seem to have power. That this support is provided precisely because the conventional economic narrative is designed to support the winners, and not explain how or why their position is justified does not matter when there is no contrary story.

There is then no point getting stressed by Trump, and none at all at by May then unless the left respond to the challenge of rebuilding its economics so that those whose fortunes are no longer served by the economy are given a chance. Only when that happens can we really change things.

My professional focus is mainly on tax research this year but this broader economic issue cannot be ignored. Working alone and with others building a credible alternative to the failed economic narrative of the right that lets us also prevent any further advance for their torrid social policies has to be high on my agenda. It's the least the few economists willing to work in this area can do.