

Could hate win?

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The obvious question to ask after this week's National Conservative conference is how far can hate take the right? It was, after all, the one theme of that event.

The obvious response is that they seem to think that the answer is 'back to power' when the loss of that power appears imminent. When all else, including their attempts at government, gerrymandering and threats, have failed I suspect their thinking is 'why nobody try hate?'

They certainly did so this week. It seems that they hate just about everyone.

They certainly hate many in their own party.

They also hate women. Those who have too many children, especially of the wrong colour, are to be despised. Those who do not have children are also on the hate list.

Likewise, women who work are hated. But so too are those who do not.

Migrants are hated, unless they now think they have assimilated and are on the far-right.

The anti-Semitic tropes were out in force.

So too was anti-woke rhetoric. These people hate equality, which means that they do like discrimination in every form in which it comes.

And they love their country so much that they hate those who love theirs, most especially if that country might be Wales, Scotland or Ireland.

They also hate government, which is odd given that they want to perpetuate their own rule after thirteen years in office.

And they mostly especially hate those who point out all the contradictions in their positions. That includes most in the media, from Sky, to the BBC, to the Guardian. All of

these are, apparently, agents of left-wrong oppression.

Voters are not spared either, most especially if they are young, European, or likely to vote for anyone but the Tories. Although, as Jacob Rees Mogg admitted, their hatred does not seem to make them much good at gerrymandering, which they most definitely tried in the form of voter ID.

And shall we not mention the great evil in the form of the EU?

I am left wondering if these people actually like anyone, although they are so firmly against all those who divorce perhaps they really are devoted spouses, even whilst loathing everyone else.

Three obvious questions follow.

They first is whether this can be considered a political ideology? I think the obvious answer to that is that this is not an ideology. Hate might be the basis for fascism, but it is hard to describe that as an ideology, which is why so many find it difficult to define. It is, instead, a route to power. We know that it can work for that purpose, but that still does not suggest that there is anything more than the force of hate, as opposed to creed, behind it.

Second, is this sustainable? The answer is no. Hate of this sort is very hard to sustain because being angry all the time is quite hard work when there is no real positive goal in mind that can provide a focus for continuing that emotion. Power alone is no such motive. And anyway, once hate begets power it turns in on itself in forms of self-destructive rage that guarantees its eventual downfall.

Third, is this a danger in that case? The obvious answer is that yes, it is. That's firstly because it is clear that hate has driven people to power in Europe in the last century. Second, that is because we know how deeply offensive to all aspects of humanity as well as individual people and peoples the resulting governments were. And third, it is because our first past the post electoral system might just facilitate the progress of those whose only offering is hate to power.

So what can we do about it?

First, we need to emphasise the power of inclusivity, cooperation, respect and diversity in all our politics. That means jettisoning old ideas of tribalism from wherever they come.

Second, it means that we have to take practical steps to prevent hate getting into power. At present that means that we most definitely have to support proportional representation.

Third, when there is real difference we need to respect it. When the capacity for

compromise has ended (and most of life is built on that capacity) then it is time to say that there is disagreement, and to respect that right to differ and to uphold those who do, because that is key to democracy. In other words, disagreement must not be hateful.

As example of the last, I can accept the right of the Tories to promote ideas I disagree with. But I do not think that they have the right to treat those who disagree with them as 'others' who must be treated with contempt as a result.

We do not have a politics built on these last three ideas at present. Labour and most unionist parties badly fail the first test. Labour is also badly failing the second. And to be candid, Labour's obsessive expulsion of the democratic left in its party leaves it badly failing the third, whilst recent comments by the LibDem leader in Scotland suggesting that Scotland has no right to exist also leave it on shaky ground there.

So, I am worried. Hate is toxic and is consuming the Tories. But the political capacity to oppose hate seems to be limited. That means that we are in a dangerous position where hate might win. We all need to be worried.