

Unless they change their attitude to climate change the...

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It is my usual habit, as is apparent from this blog, to write posts quite early in the morning. However, given the state of the weather this weekend, my wife and I were out by the river in Ely by seven this morning, walking and birdwatching.

It was peaceful, beautiful and rewarding. Garden warbler, linnets and what looked to be a young male reed bunting seeking to claim its first territory and singing loudly whilst doing so were the highlights, but the usual rewards of river watching from great crested grebes to herons and young moorhen, plus the sound but not the sight of a kingfisher, were all there.

I admit that it was also fun to go out for a coffee afterwards to take the time to reflect upon the morning's news, which is depressing.

The Greek government is evacuating Rhodes.

Simultaneously, it seems that both the Tories and Labour want to backtrack on their environmental commitments because of the supposed marginal impact it may have had on election results in Uxbridge.

Newspapers are excitedly declaring today that enormous pressure is being brought to bear upon Sadiq Khan to reform his ULEZ policy, even though that was actually imposed upon him by the current government as a condition of funding for Transport for London. In truth, therefore, Starmer is demanding that a Labour mayor backtrack on the already pathetic level of environmental commitment our current government has.

I long suspected that something like this would happen. It was always obvious that at some point a political commitment to climate change would conflict with the policies of neoliberal growth that have so long underpinned the thinking of our major political parties. That conflict is now happening at exactly the same moment that it is becoming very apparent in multitudinous places around the world that the cost of that growth is already unsustainable.

The early commentators on this issue, from Schumacher in the 1970s onwards,

predicted that this would happen. For a while it was possible to pretend otherwise, particularly after events like COP 26. The truth, however, is that the commitments made there were just a sham. Big business, governments in hock to it, and politicians living in fear of the mainstream media that incites hatred against any alternative to current environmental destruction as well as the idea that there might be a social purpose to politics, meant that those politicians were always going to oppose the policies that are now necessary to tackle the threat from climate change.

The threat created by climate change is now bigger than that which was created by Covid.

It is bigger than the threat created by the global financial crisis in 2008.

It is also likely that the threat is now at least as big as that created by the Second World War because as many people as then are now at risk from democidal governments.

The problem that we face is that we have to live with politicians who deny all these things. Indeed, they now appear to be in denial of the basic facts of climate change and the resulting fact that climate change demands that we must change the way that we live.

It will no longer be possible for us to consume in the way that we did.

It will not be possible for us to travel in the way that we did.

It will not be possible for us to despoil our planet in the way that we have.

It will not be possible for us to eat in the way that we did.

What, however, is possible despite all these things is that we can live well. That, I believe, is possible because what brings us the most pleasure in life is, almost invariably, the company that we share, the experiences that we have on a day-to-day basis and the sense of well-being that both can generate.

What does not bring us a sense of well-being is the sense of inadequacy that is fundamental to almost all advertising that is used to promote excessive material consumption, which advertising and excessive consumption are always linked to the desire to keep us in debt, upon which outcome almost the whole of the financial services industry is dependent, which is why it too is such a threat to our survival.

What most definitely causes us stress in life are threats to our health, our ability to make ends meet, and threats to those for whom we care, including all those younger than we might be.

What is indisputably true as a result is that most politicians from most major political parties (Labour, the Tories, LibDems and SNP) pose a major threat to the well-being of

all young people in our country and so to the wellbeing of all of us. Their collective denial of climate reality, coupled with their refusal to deliver the necessary required changes and to make clear how those changes must be funded (very largely by major redistribution of wealth to counter the impact of the necessary spending that must take place) represents a total negation of responsibility on their part.

I continue to believe that it is possible for the human race to continue to inhabit the earth and to have rewarding lives. But I have to stress the word possible in that statement because that possibility is under threat from timid political leadership on almost all sides of our supposed political spectrum.

Will we see the recovery of the body politic in the UK so that it might recover the courage required to tackle these issues? I genuinely do not know, but I am quite sure that the need for it to do so is essential for our survival.