

## A feast of fools

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My old friend Alan Simpson, who was a Labour MP when we first met, sent me this over the weekend. I thought it worth sharing, so I do so, with his permission:

### **A Feast of Fools** what happens when politics gets lost?

British politics has lost the plot. Rishi Sunak isn't a clever charlatan like Boris Johnson. He's more superficial; a cartoon 'bear with little brain'. His grasp of issues is mainly opportunistic. In climate terms, this makes him more dangerous.

Sunak's wooing of motorists is an attempt to turn the next election into an episode of Top Gear. Don't be surprised if you find 'go-fast' stripes down the side of Conservative election leaflets. Sod the planet, just strap yourself in and hold on tight!

Britain might be facing a soggy August but the Antarctic is disintegrating, the Mediterranean is on fire, flash flooding creates havoc throughout Asia and Northern Europe, and scientists call out for a new World Climate Crisis Organisation. Sunak's answer is to make the streets safer for cars than kids. This is what passes as leadership.

Labour isn't faring much better. When the High Court is to the Left of Labour on climate issues you know that politics is in a mess.

#### **Unhinged in Uxbridge**

Climate politics unravelled when the Tories hung on in the Uxbridge by-election. They ran a crude campaign opposing the extension of London's Ultra Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ). Labour ducked this challenge, never mentioning the annual 4,000 excess deaths London's crap air quality is responsible for. Nor did it support Sadiq Khan, the London Labour Mayor, in his attempt to give Londoners a breathable future. Its retrospective call on Khan to 'reflect' on his ULEZ proposals looked pitiful.

Emboldened by invertebrate opposition, 5 Tory Councils took the case to court, attempting to block ULEZ. When the High Court robustly dismissed the case - bless 'em - Labour officials were left wondering if they could expel the High Court, along with everyone else with a mind of their own. Only Sadiq Khan came out of this well.

Worst of all, Uxbridge provided a platform for the Tory Right to trot out demands that UK abandon its climate targets in favour of slash and burn deregulation.

Sunak's response was to juggle with absurdities; promising net-zero in the afterlife whilst approving 100 new oil and gas exploration licences in the North Sea. This was 'deckchair's on the Titanic' politics.

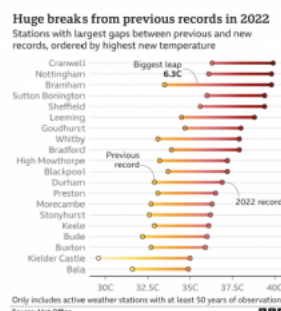
The real answer is to shift into radical policy changes now whilst navigating our way through the wild weather crises now surrounding us.

The Atlantic is almost 1°C warmer than it has ever been, with huge implications for carbon absorption and weather patterns. Last year, all areas of Britain broke temperature records. Now the Met Office warns that these temperatures will be 'on the cool side of normal' by the end of the century. By then, ULEZ will be the last thing anyone worries about.

Neither climate breakdown nor the need for a different economics even got a mention in post-by-election skirmishes. And for Labour, nothing that might imply a complete re-write of Treasury rules is even allowed to cross the Party's lips. It will all end in tears.

#### **Pro-poor, pro-planet**

The challenge is to 'badge' Labour as unambiguously pro-poor and pro-planet. It can't be left to Met Office reports to



tease out the disastrous consequences of anything less.

Being fearful of the climate crisis makes sense. But progressive politics must offer 'hope not hate' alternatives. Only Ed Miliband appears to grasp this.

You don't have to have been in love with Jeremy Corbyn to recognise that 'hope' was what he captured. Huge numbers filled their hearts with it and joined the Party. Some 150,000 who did so have left, not because the man has been demonised but because the dream is being abandoned.

Things can only get ...

Both major parties are hamstrung by an obsession with existing Treasury rules. Each pays lip service to net-zero commitments but pretends we have more than a decade to deliver. Climate physics knows better. What we do in the 2020's will determine whether we have a chance of avoiding cataclysmic breakdown.

CO2 emissions must be cut by at least 10% per year - every year - for over a decade. To do so involves re-