

Funding the Future

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I was on Sky News last night, supposedly debating the inheritance tax charge on farms.

I say supposedly for a good reason. I went on presuming that we might have a calm discussion, but it became very obvious almost immediately that this was not what my two opponents had in mind. Their intention was to be abusive. The representative of the Country Landowners suggested in the middle of one of her interventions that I was a Marxist, without any justification, whilst the young farmer was the only 23-year-old I have ever come across whose primary concern in life was, apparently, inheritance tax. He was also already obsessing about his desire that his six-month-old must follow him in the life of misery that he had apparently willingly chosen for himself. None of that made any sense at all.

Unsurprisingly, the discussion got heated, largely because these two were utterly unwilling to listen to the suggestions and comments I made and were willing to state for any reason that they could think of that anyone who is not a farmer has no right to offer opinion on this matter.

Sky tweeted out two clips on Twitter, and they are all I have to share. I should add that I overstated my case on business property relief in the first clip, but only in part: that it can apply to activities that are managed on and from farms and can significantly assist the passing of property between generations is being ignored in the debate, and that was the point I was seeking to make:

<https://twitter.com/skynews/status/1858975669696557159?s=66&t=fQEnD35XLiGihXL T1M1wyA>

The other is here, but will not embed, [so please follow this link](#).

I don't think this was the most useful debate I have ever been involved in, or my best moment on air, but I think that was always going to be impossible when faced with two opponents who were only interested in promoting data for which there is no evidence and abuse for anyone who wanted to question it.

After the interview, I reflected on this. This issue is obviously attracting passionate

interest. Yesterday was the biggest day for blog traffic here for over a year - beating elections and the budget for the scale of interest shown. My video on this issue has attracted 42,000 views so far, with many watching it all the way through the whole 18 minutes. But what is really happening was my question.

The giveaway for me was the verbal abuse from the Country Landowner's rep. She did not drop the claim about me being a Marxist in for nothing. She obviously does not know what a Marxist is. If she did, she would know I am not one, but what she wanted was to politicise this because it is politics that this is very obviously about.

The same was true of the young farmer. His line, that he was being penalised, and that the food supply would fail if he stopped working, and so that he must have the right to inherit and pass on his farm, were all deeply political tropes. So, too, was the accusation that I can know nothing about the countryside because I am not a farmer, even though I live metres from it and have observed its destruction by these farmers, who claim that they love it so dearly and yet have willingly partaken in its environmental degradation for decades.

I also noted the arrogance of the claims made in everything I heard all day. The claim is that poor farmers (and for the record, not all farmers are poor) have a right to farm even though they run what would normally be called failed businesses and that the state must support them to do so because they have an inherited right to pursue this activity that is not only environmentally harmful in many cases, but detrimental to their own well-being and which could in most cases very obviously be done better by others, or those other people would not be queuing up to buy their land. What this comes down to is a demand from farmers that the state should support their lifestyle choices, whatever the cost to the state might be.

What we are actually seeing is a very obvious case of a demand for socialism for the wealthy, with utter indifference and even outright contempt on display for anyone who might question the right of those wealthy people to claim this.

What is more, someone is very carefully rigging the news agenda with blatant misinformation to pursue this agenda, as if this case of the hardship of those who could be immediately very well off if only they sold the family farms that are so burdensome to them was the highest priority in the country. As I tweeted last night:



I admire the ability of these people to mobilise, but my conclusion is that farmers do not

deserve a shred of sympathy for all this. Something deeply sinister is going on here, and unlike most people in dire straits in this country, farmers have options available to them and a very comfortable way out of their dilemma. Whatever sympathy I had has evaporated. The politics of privilege are being played here, and I find that extremely distasteful.