

# Reclaiming the news agenda

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I was reflecting last night on the news and its obsession with Trump, with Putin, with war, with genocide, with Israel, with small boats, and with whatever Farage has had to say. I could not help but think that what so much of this far-right agenda is achieving can be measured in the way it is pushing news that is important out of our line of sight.

Poverty, inequality, diversity, stagnant wages, the absence of job opportunities, NHS waiting lists and strikes, the punishment of those on benefits, the impossibility so many face in making ends meet, and so much more — all of which are vastly more important than most of the things the media are talking about — have simply disappeared from the news because of the success of the far right in controlling the media agenda with their madness.

There is, in economics, the concept of opportunity cost. That is the cost that arises because something that was possible was not done, as another action was preferred. I think that this applies very strongly to the media's obsession with fascist causes at present. So long as we give these people the news agenda, the pressure for reforms that would really make the lives of many better is forgotten.

At the same time, issues that are essential for our long-term well-being are also being pushed to the sidelines, including, most especially, climate change; the growing impossibility of people living in some parts of the world where habitation has previously been considered normal; and the fact that the need for climate migration is growing almost by the day. Add to that mix the fact that we have done nothing to solve the water crisis in this country, or to improve our long-term food supply, or to address the impact that food quality has on our health, and we really are in profound trouble.

It's all too easy to be sucked into the vortex of concern about what the fascists are doing — but that is precisely what they want us to do. We then forget what is necessary for survival, and that issue is, to them, a matter of complete indifference, because the whole point about fascism is that it has no concern for people at all. The only thing that matters for those who lead fascist movements is the accumulation of yet more wealth and power for a tiny elite.

When people ask me what they can do to challenge the current status quo, I always say that engaging with the media is vital, and one way to do this is to talk about what really matters. In this regard, I particularly like the approach that the commentator who uses the name RobertJ on this blog has. He talks about the discussions that he has on “the omnibus”. I do, of course, get the metaphor, which I presume must be based upon Lord Denning’s reference to the person on the Clapham omnibus, who was the representative of all ordinary people. That conversation can, however, take place anywhere and doesn’t need to be face-to-face. It could also be on social media.

My point is, those conversations need to happen. In the madness of the world in which we live, we should not forget to talk about what really matters to us, because if we do, then the politicians will undoubtedly do so as well — and that is the last thing that we want.

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