

# funding the future



THE RICHARD J MURPHY YOUTUBE CHANNEL

DEBATE AMMUNITION

MANAGING THE COMING CRISIS

Funding the Future | Issue # 6 | May 2026

---

## TODAY'S TOPIC

Managing the Coming Crisis: Why Free Market Dogma Will Cost Lives

## THE CORE ARGUMENT

The United Kingdom is heading into a physical supply crisis unlike anything seen since the Second World War. Essential goods, including food and fuel, are going to be in short supply, and markets are structurally incapable of solving that problem. When supply collapses, markets ration by price, and those who cannot afford to pay simply go without. That is not an economic adjustment. That is a death sentence for the most vulnerable people in our society.

This crisis is at least as serious as the COVID pandemic, and in important respects it is worse. COVID had a vaccine. The 2008 financial crash could be addressed through public spending and monetary policy. A physical shortage of food, fuel, and fertiliser has no such remedy. You cannot adjust interest rates and produce a barrel of oil or a tonne of wheat. The consequences will fall hardest on those least able to absorb the shock, and those on the living wage are already being priced out of essential items.

Free market dogma is already being deployed against any serious response to this crisis. When Richard spoke on [BBC Radio Five Live](#) on 21 May, a supermarket representative said the crisis was being exaggerated and that

competition would solve the problem. A farmer said simply: let the markets rip. Both of those positions reflect a worldview in which markets self-correct and people adjust. That is true only for those who have the money to adjust. For those who do not, letting markets rip means going without food and heat. People will die.

Food, energy, and fuel must be treated as public goods in a crisis, not as market commodities. The alternative to government intervention is not market stability. It is social disorder, with all the casualties that will entail. The resistance to intervention has already formed, and it must be challenged directly and urgently.

## THE ARGUMENT STRUCTURE

**Step 1 — This is a physical supply crisis, and the usual economic tools will not work:**

In 2008 the crisis was in bank balance sheets, and it responded to public spending and quantitative easing.

In 2020 the crisis was medical, and it responded to vaccines.

This crisis involves physical shortage of the goods our economy depends on, including oil, gas, food, and fertiliser. No interest rate decision or bond-buying programme can produce those things when they are simply not available in sufficient quantity. Reaching for monetary tools in a physical shortage crisis would be a catastrophic mistake.

**Step 2 — Markets cannot solve a physical shortage, and pretending otherwise will cost lives:**

When essential goods are in short supply, markets do not distribute them fairly. They allocate them to whoever can pay the highest price. The supermarket representative and the farmer who appeared on BBC Radio Five Live alongside Richard both argued that competition would sort things out, but both of them will still be able to afford their food and their petrol. They cannot imagine what it will be like for those who cannot. That is not a lack of imagination; it is

indifference to others, dressed up as economic principle. People who cannot pay market prices for food and heat will go without. Some of them will die.

**Step 3 — The human cost is already real, and a combined food and fuel crisis will make it catastrophically worse:**

Around 25,000 people a year already die in this country from the cold, because pensions are too low for people to heat their homes adequately. People on the living wage are already being priced out of essential items. A combined food and fuel crisis this winter could produce something far worse. Richard said this plainly on BBC Radio Five Live: if we let markets rip, people will die. A mother who cannot feed her children is always one of the angriest people on earth, and civil unrest driven by exactly this kind of injustice is already visible in parts of Africa. Food shortages are already emerging in Southeast Asia. We should not pretend it cannot happen here.

**Step 4 — Free market dogma is the organised resistance to solving this crisis, and it must be named and challenged:**

The words communist, statist, and socialist are already being used to dismiss any serious response to this crisis, including rationing, price controls, and market support. Richard was not making a party political argument on Radio Five Live. He was arguing that people need food, heat, and fuel to stay alive, and that everything else is secondary to meeting that basic requirement. Callous indifference to the suffering that market rationing will cause is not a neutral economic position. It is a political choice, and it must be challenged as such. The alternative to intervention is not stability. It is disorder, and the harsh government response that disorder would inevitably provoke.

**THEIR ARGUMENT → YOUR REBUTTAL**

They Say	Your Response
<p>“You are exaggerating the crisis. Competition between supermarkets will sort out food prices.”</p>	<p>Competition requires supply. When there is a physical shortage of essential raw materials, supermarkets cannot compete to sell food that simply does not exist in sufficient quantity. The market mechanism in a genuine</p>

	<p>shortage allocates goods to whoever can pay the highest price. People who cannot pay that price go without. In a food and fuel crisis, going without does not mean inconvenience. It means illness and death. Around 25,000 people already die in this country from cold each year. A combined food and fuel crisis will make that worse.</p>
<p>“Let the markets rip. Prices will adjust and people will find ways to cope.”</p>	<p>People on the living wage are already being priced out of essential items. Finding ways to cope, when you cannot afford food or heating, means going without one or both of them. That is not adjustment; it is suffering. People already die in this country because they cannot afford to heat their homes. A combined food and fuel crisis will produce something considerably worse than that. Letting markets rip is a political choice about who bears the cost of this crisis, and the people who will bear it are those who can least afford to do so.</p>
<p>“Rationing and price controls are socialist policies. They have no place in a modern economy.”</p>	<p>Rationing and price controls were used successfully in the United Kingdom during the Second World War, when the country faced precisely this kind of physical supply constraint. They were administratively complex but they were broadly effective, and they were seen as fair by the public. Fairness is the foundation of public compliance in a crisis. Dismissing these tools as socialist is not an argument; it is a way of avoiding the real question, which is whether people can eat and heat their homes. If the market cannot deliver that, direct government intervention is</p>

	not ideological. It is the only responsible course of action.
“The government cannot afford to intervene at this scale. Fiscal responsibility has to come first.”	The United Kingdom is a monetary sovereign. It issues its own currency and cannot run out of it. The real risk is not government insolvency; it is political failure to deploy the capacity that the government already has, at the scale that this crisis demands. Inaction is the fiscally irresponsible choice. The cost of not acting, measured in avoidable deaths, long-term poverty, deteriorating health, and social breakdown, will far exceed the cost of acting now while action can still make a difference.

**THE ONE-LINER**

“When markets are left to ration food and fuel by price in a physical shortage, those who cannot pay do not adjust — they go without, and some of them die; calling that economic principle does not make it any less callous or any less lethal.”

**FURTHER READING — FUNDING THE FUTURE BLOG**

Post	Date	What it covers
<a href="#">Are We Ready for the Crash Coming Our Way?</a>	21 May 2026	Sets out the full scale of the physical supply crisis and explains why rationing, price controls, and direct government intervention are the only credible responses.
<a href="#">Why We Need Rationing, Now</a>	2 April 2026	Drawing on Keynes and Galbraith, this post sets out the detailed case for immediate government rationing of oil, aviation fuel, heating oil, and food, alongside a fundamental

		redesign of the tax system to fund the response.
<a href="#">The Seven Steps to Economic Meltdown</a>	10 May 2026	Maps the sequence from supply chain fracture through fuel shortage to food shortage and social unrest, and explains why physical rationing of fuel and food is necessary before the situation reaches a point of crisis.
<a href="#">Why Are We Facing a Food Crisis?</a>	2 May 2026	Explains the four simultaneous pressures on world food supply and why the United Kingdom is not insulated from them. Directly supports the argument that shortage is structural and will not be resolved by market adjustment.
<a href="#">The Economic Shocks to Come</a>	10 April 2026	Sets out why the disruption to fertiliser supply caused by the Hormuz closure could affect crop yields across multiple growing seasons, and why a food shortage this winter is not merely possible but likely.
<a href="#">Tax Wealth Now</a>	27 April 2026	Argues that markets cannot solve a crisis of absolute shortage and makes the case for combining rationing of essential goods with higher taxation of wealth, so that the cost of responding to the crisis falls on those best able to bear it.

### ABOUT RICHARD MURPHY

Richard Murphy is a political economist, emeritus professor of accounting practice at Sheffield University Management School, a former professor of international political economy and, for 42 years, a practising chartered

accountant. As a tax justice campaigner, he created country-by-country reporting which is now legally required for multinational corporations' tax reporting in more than 70 countries around the world to tackle tax haven abuse. He is one of the UK's most widely read heterodox economics bloggers. He is the author of the Funding the Future blog and runs the Richard J Murphy YouTube channel, which has more than 365,000 subscribers. He co-founded both the Tax Justice Network and the Green New Deal.

**YOU CAN FIND RICHARD AT:**

- Blog, [Funding the Future blog](#)
- Twitter/X, [@richardjmurphy](#)
- Bluesky, [@richardjmurphy.bsky.social](#)
- YouTube, [Richard J Murphy YouTube channel](#)