

Politically correct speaking

Wokeish is not my mother tongue, but I feel I can usually speak and write it fluently because it is all the opposition parties in the Commons speak all the time. It is prevalent on the BBC and mainstream media, so news is dominated by its tropes and preoccupations.

It is stifling much debate and creating a divide with the informal conversations of some parts of the social media and of life when permitted in many clubs, bars and homes. It seems to be driving some people who do not follow politically correct thought into more extremes of language and frustration, which is bad for democratic debate. It means anyone however moderate and decent can fall foul of the unwritten rules of language and attitude that the left insist on. It leaves those of us who want proper debate about the preoccupations of the public struggling to allow it, given the severe censorship of the very topics on one side, and the roughness of language of some frustrated voters on the other side who threaten to abuse what should be the right of free speech.

There is a narrow preoccupation with certain themes, and a rigid view of certain challenges and opportunities. Brexit is all bad and always bad to the followers of politically correct fashion. They simply take every lie, half truth and threat from the EU side in the negotiations and retail it as truth. Many editors and interviewers bat for the EU in composition and questions of the interviews.

They alternate their anger over Brexit with their dominant wish that every sacrifice be made by the UK to purge the last drop of oil, the last molecule of gas and the last lump of coal from our lives and economy, as if the UK alone was responsible for their view of impending climate disaster and as if it will save the planet if the UK does abandon all carbon. There is no proportion in their understanding, and no room for anyone to ask critical questions or offer an alternative way forward. Gone is the usual worry about lost jobs or economic penalties as they chase a perfectly carbon free economy before the technologies to deliver it resonate with the public or are even available to buy.

Like most of us, they object strongly to slavery, yet their main anger is to slavery past by UK traders, with no mention of the people who traded slaves with them. They show scant parallel interest with the ugly slaveries of today that we might do something about. They rummage through UK history to highlight events and attitudes that we no longer support, ignoring the noble causes and the successes. They decline to mention the common adoption of the unacceptable by other countries and governments at the same time. England is always in the wrong, and never the victim in their world of devils and angels. There is a complete lack of pride in the UK's role in bringing democracy to the world, in the successful campaigns fought against religious intolerance and slavery, and the battles for equality under the law and votes for all.

We need to take back control of our language and of the agenda. A strong democracy is one that can conduct a civilised but serious and passionate debate about what matters to large blocks of opinion. Attempts to prevent topics and ban any view you disagree with is usually an unwelcome move to alienate significant parts of the electorate and impoverish decision taking.