



## TRUTH AND POLITICS

*By Sally Campbell*

**“It’s profiteering not wage rises, that has led to greedflation”** (Larry Elliott *The Guardian* 20/04/23).

Our grocery bills are rising at the fastest rate since 1977. Global food commodity prices are dropping and so are global energy prices so why are junior doctors and nurses being told they are inflating prices? What has been found by the IMF (International Monetary Fund, and European Central Bank), is that companies have used the crisis initiated by Putin to drive up prices and boost profits. There is a non-technical term for what is happening and this is **GREEDFLATION**.

Ministers decided the narrative is “Your demands fuel inflation and make it more persistent”, words now being echoed by the Governor of the Bank of England. Untrue, as wages are lagging well below price increases. IMF Chief Economist quoted as follows: “Nominal wage inflation lags far behind price inflation, which implies a steep and unprecedented decline in real wages”. The flip side of steeply rising prices and only modestly rising higher wages has resulted in profit margins surging and pushed prices and profits through the roof.

A report by the union Unite in March blamed systematic profiteering across the economy for fuelling the cost of living crisis. The European Central Bank showed that in 2022 alone, profits contributed to two thirds of the inflation rise. But the UK government is not interested in greedflation and the Governor of the Bank of England has called for wage restraint but not price restraint. Greedflation will become a policy issue, and the question will be asked, “Why should workers take real pay cuts and told to make sacrifices, when companies including banks do not show restraint?”

Government must tell the truth and not blame nurses, teachers, junior doctors and civil servants for greed—that belongs elsewhere in the economy. Good Leadership is about long-term strategy and recognising the importance of thinking through long term consequences, not just for allies but the rest of us too.

I was reminded recently of the long-term damage to the UK social fabric by previous policies of the UK government, under Mrs Thatcher. Nigel Lawson, who died recently in 2023, was her Chancellor and the changes he instigated in the UK included the privatisation of public services. These included water, except in Scotland, gas, electricity and of course the sell off of council houses at a discount (the monies from the council house sales were not returned to the local

authorities to build new housing stock and starved of funds that sector was critically diminished). Lawson preached that much more investment would come as a result of privatisation of services but it did not come...so now we have sewage saturation of rivers, and inshore waters, electricity and gas companies, poor at service, yet all these companies paying out huge dividends to investors and senior managers, resulting in poor service and little accountability to users of their services.

These short-term measures to cut taxes for the mostly wealthy have had serious and lasting negative consequences for us all. In later life Lawson chaired a group denying climate change and set up a think tank "Global Warming Policy Foundation". He campaigned in favour of Brexit, and yet lived half his retirement in a neoclassical farmhouse in Gascony in France. So, to me, his lack of long-term strategic understanding of potential unintended consequences for all the population overshadows his short term "successes".

More recently another example is the Grenfell disaster of 14 June 2017 when 72 people died in a tower block; another consequence of short termism in government through lack of regulation and enforcement. Why, oh why has it taken the report, after a 6-year enquiry not been seriously considered by the government and fully explored in the public? It is a story of how Britain is governed and a corporate world with an "almost psychotic disregard for human life". Lies, deceit, short term profit and regulators who would not regulate, accepting that safety was not "economically viable". Many of the bodies responsible for regulation or certification were privatised, making them more beholden to their "clients" and reluctant to push too hard.

But other changes are afoot, not acceptable to huge swathes of the country. The requirement to interpret EU- derived law according to general principles of EU Law will disappear from the end of 2023. There is now serious concern and opposition across many sectors, including business, environmental groups, unions and Brussels to the latest attempt to remove all EU environmental and other sector legislation from the UK rule book by 31 December this year. The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill will enable the UK government to implement policies in its Benefits of Brexit report, dated 2022. But such strong opposition has left Ministers with no option, despite shouts from MP Jacob Rees-Mogg, to consider delay and moving to a scaled down and less hurried version, especially as the House of Lords voiced huge opposition and threatened to rebel.

It is the story of some politicians ideologically hostile to regulation. In the 1980s Margaret Thatcher's government swept away virtually all building regulations, promising "maximum self-regulation" and "minimum government interference". David Cameron in 2012 made a New Year pledge "to kill off health and safety culture for good", and launched a new set of regulation cuts including fire safety inspections. The long-term result is poorly designed and cheaply built new houses and, sadly, unsafe solutions to renovations at Grenfell tower.

The Grenfell disaster is mostly the story of how warnings were ignored because any disaster was only likely to happen to poor people "who should be grateful for what they had". This contempt for the poor filtered through decades of official discussion of social housing. Hannah Wahabi, who escaped but lost her brother and family in the tower told the inquiry, "Had we been from a different class, had been less ethnic, the response in the aftermath would have been immediate". After six years so little has changed. There is appreciation of the way it helped expose the depth of corruption and mendacity. On the other "We were promised the inquiry would not get in the way of justice, but 6 years on, no one has been held accountable and no one has faced criminal prosecution."

This sounds familiar to the government dragging its feet over the Windrush families and their serious immigration problems and the government committing serious errors of law for several hundred families. And there are the difficulties for sub postmasters, fined, jailed, made destitute when the Post Office IT system was proved faulty and again those prosecuted incorrectly await compensation etc; in all these examples the public awaits accountability by government and companies.

Now, the return of the Immigration Bill, and its passage at the third reading in the House of Commons. The Council of Europe has "grave concerns" about the legislation. The UK's

Equalities and Human Rights Commission added its voice to the chorus of criticism as has Amnesty International. There are 6 major concerns:

- . undermining human rights
- . removal of protections for victims of trafficking
- . penalising of refugees
- . provision of detention of children, giving the Home Secretary unprecedented powers to detain under 18s and remove their legal rights whether in a family group or alone. Research of recent unaccompanied children from Afghanistan showed almost 100% were permitted to stay, and other countries showed that last year almost 9 out of 10, that is almost 80%, received permission too.

We must hope the House of Lords amends this poor legislation. If we reflect on our history, we are a land of immigrants since the last Ice Age retreat, recolonised by Europeans, be they Danes, Irish, Vikings, French, and Empire and Commonwealth citizens; many nationalities, cultures and religions. The rich tapestry of the UK has never felt so unwelcoming to those seeking shelter and a safer life.

### **SO, WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?**

It is a vital component to a healthy and people-friendly society. Poor and incompetent leaders blame their workers, as so clearly exemplified by Dominic Raab a week ago, sacked by the Prime Minister after a lengthy inquiry for his unreasonable behaviour with staff. Raab was given 24 hours before the public saw the report, trying to persuade us via “friendly media” a different narrative about “activist” and “over unionised” officials so his problems were the fault of the Civil Service. Now he and other right-wing politicians are advocating the politicisation of senior civil servants to do their bidding.

### **So, what do good leaders of communities, companies, charities, countries do differently?**

- . Share their policy ideas with their teams and listen to their initial feedback.
- . Listen to the team’s ideas, opinions, and experts in their fields. At least consider these thoughts and ideas.
- . Do not belittle, shout, ignore, refuse to read reports etc., or determine things behind their backs, and recruit sycophantic followers. Power hungry leaders are so often insecure in themselves.
- . Always remember as leader, you are only as good as your team. Sycophantic teams driven by fear of job loss, or loss of promotion, and belittled and bullied, never achieve long term potential. Maybe short-term autocrat or dictator as a leader, leaving a trail of disasters for others to try and repair.

At present we are in Germany on holiday and notice how towns, and villages and the countryside are all well cared for, and managed. Good road surfaces for example! What is also clear, the immigration policy is working well, and this country has integrated millions of refugees over the last 20 years with huge benefits for immigrants and the German economy. No years of waiting for decisions, unlike the UK. So far in 2023, The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees recorded around 87,777 asylum applications. In 2022 there were 244,132 thousand applications, an increase of over 50,000 in 2021 figures. The Home Secretary Suella Braverman in her vitriolic rhetoric needs to think through her policies and get applications dealt with in a timely manner. It has been a feature of the UK history that those who do succeed in arriving on our shores, when they gain power or leadership, often wish to “shut the door behind them”. So many seek new homes because of internal strife, climate change and loss of livelihoods, such as the residents of NW Africa losing their fish to rapacious huge trawlers just off shore to make fish meal for such as salmon farmers for the wealthier northern countries. Cannot the Home Secretary understand the complexities of the need for families to risk everything in order to survive? In recent times with serious negative rhetoric on immigration by politicians such as Enoch Powell in late 1960s to the present Home Secretary Suella Braverman, it makes me wonder what can turn this negativity around. With my family name Chivers, some with that name, came with the Normans in the 11th century, some as Huguenots and Protestants escaping Catholic France in the 18th century. Do you all know where your family came from and when? I married a Campbell which makes me almost acceptable on Arran...I have been asked many

times. How come by you are here? (wrong accent for Arran? My initial reply was always I married a Campbell... now I just say I live here). More acceptance of difference is a vital component of leadership. Think on that in the weeks ahead as we hear of the struggles from the Sudan, our NHS doctors struggling to get back here, and Ukraine, and the flight from climate catastrophes or decimation of natural resources caused largely by the rich of the world, often leaving indigenous people having to move to survive.

Sally Campbell  
April 2023



Photos taken in Germany. Credit: Sally Campbell