

## My intervention during the debate on Covid-19, 28 September 2020

**Sir John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):** May I have a progress report on something we have talked about before: infection control? This time round, will there be isolation hospitals so that we can control the infection in the hospital sector better, and will there be good controls to prevent the seepage of people with infection back to care homes?

**The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Mr Matt Hancock):** The answer to both those questions is yes. We have learnt a huge amount about those and put in place improved procedures, but I am going to come on to the question of the impact of that on our strategy.

The virus has shown beyond all possible doubt that the health of one of us begets the health of us all. Without a doubt in my mind, the central question about the control of the virus, and one that I ask myself every day, is, "How do we best keep people safe from this virus while protecting liberty and livelihoods and the things that make life worth living?" I believe that in reality there is not a simple trade-off between those things, because the exponential growth of the virus means that there are in reality only two paths: either to control the virus or to let it rip.

There is no middle option, because once the virus is growing, it accelerates. To the point made by my right hon. Friend the Right Hon Member for Wokingham (Mr Redwood), I am convinced that no matter how effectively we protect the vulnerable, and protect them we must, letting the virus rip would leave a death toll too big to bear. In reality, the only question is how to control the virus and when to put measures in place.

That comes directly to the question that we have been debating about both how to control the virus, and how we must act fast. The best thing we can do for schools, for our economy and for both lives and livelihoods is to act fast, together, to control the virus and to keep the rate of infections down. From that goal flows our strategy, which is to suppress the virus while protecting our economy and education until a vaccine arrives.

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## More lock downs?

Today if the government proposes more lock downs it needs to answer these questions:

1. Why have cases risen for so long in places already under local lock downs?

2. What is the exit strategy from lock down, and how do you avoid growth in the virus again if lock downs work?
  3. Is there local buy in to the lock down, as it needs consent to work.
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## A green energy policy

I welcome moves to improve energy efficiency and to ensure our energy generation and use avoids pollution.

The UK along with other advanced nations has done a good job in using law and guidance to cut the output of particulates and dangerous gases substantially. Power station and factory chimneys have ways of cutting out dangerous material. Petrol and diesel exhausts have been transformed by technology to remove harmful particles. Vehicles today cause much more of a problem from tyre wear and brake dust than from exhausts. Those smoke filled scenes of the Industrial revolution have gone, steam trains have been consigned to the museums, and London smog is only in the history books.

More needs to be done. It is best to tighten the requirements progressively at a pace technology and the market can absorb, as we have been doing. We need to look at how we can improve standards on domestic heating systems, start to cut tyre and brake wear residues, and be tough and vigilant on industrial plant. We need to encourage a much better approach to litter, where we see the results of worldwide bad behaviour in the state of our seas and what washes up on our beaches. We also see it in our countryside and by the edge of many of our roads and pathways, where a minority UK citizens have decided to burden the rest of us with their fast food containers and other detritus.

The win win is the promotion of fuel efficiency. I am keen on government initiatives to help people insulate their homes and improve the efficiency of their domestic installations. Business and government can work with people, offering them popular products because they are better. Why not use a scheme if it means you can be warmer at home and save money on the fuel bills?

The U.K. needs to pay more attention to reliable capacity and price. We have become too dependent on imports through the inter connectors, and need sufficient back up power given the amount of intermittent renewables now on the system. Rebuilding our industry and expanding our horticulture will require more cheaper power.

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# A Conservative green policy

As a particular view of what is a green policy rests at the core of the globalists position, let us begin our exploration of the policy agenda with green matters.

I am a green enthusiast. I wish to live in a country with plenty of beautiful countryside, with clean water and air, where we fish and farm in a sustainable manner and pass on our soils and seas in good order to our children. As a Conservative I take the longer view, see our individual lives as leases, and our own presence here as part of a continuum from ancestors to successors. Families and nations act to sustain memories of what has happened and to support the hopes of the young for the future. We all have a stake in a common past and plans for a better general future.

The immediate task of alleviating undue human pressures on the natural world must rest with less population growth. I have no wish for government to try to limit family size. Rising prosperity and improving chances of survival are the main ways families and nations come to adopt self limitation on the numbers of children voluntarily. Here in the UK the birth rate is below the level of 2 children per woman to keep the population constant, which is a good outcome. Where in the world the birth rate is higher it usually accompanies poverty, disease and shorter life expectancy. We need to help low income nations rise from these tribulations, which we can do by promoting free trade, offering them help with fresh water supplies, medicines and emergency assistance, and ensuring the great technologies of the west are available for them to conquer the problems which hold them back.

Our UK green policy must start with proper control of net migration. We should aim for far fewer economic migrants than have come since Labour first changed our policies following their 1997 election win. The UK needs to train and retain our own skilled personnel, and to mechanise or pay more for the unskilled jobs where governments and business have too readily reached for cheap labour from abroad.

Once we have control of numbers, we can protect more of our countryside from development, and abate our growing appetite for various finite natural resources. Many of the troublesome issues which have arisen, from where to build thousands of extra homes to how to deal with overcrowding on our public transport systems fall away completely or are eased.

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## Build back better

Build back better is a common phrase in modern politics, used by some on the centre right as well as by the many on the left. It is Biden's campaign

phrase that binds his left wing programme. The UK Build back better campaign is anti the rich and big companies, and shares a lot in common with the Biden platform. Presumably those on the centre right who use the phrase define it differently to these mainstream versions.

There are those who think there is a global conspiracy led by a billionaire or two who they think set the agenda. I do not post such work, as it is silly. The views and actions many of you dislike are far more widespread and complex than a simple case of undue influence by one individual or think tank. It is a systematic agenda and way of thinking that infuses most global institutions and many governments or main Oppositions in leading countries. What Joe Biden says is similar to the EU programme which is reflected in the IMF's statements, the views of the World Economic Forum, the World Health Organisation, the UN, the G7 and many others. The members of a numerous well paid and much travelled global elite reinforce the same consensus everywhere they go. Some are senior elected politicians leading governments who need not accept this way of thinking if they did not agree with it.

The centre left version of the consensus sees CV 19 as a crisis full of opportunity. They usually agree that economic recovery should build back a different world. Their number one enemy is carbon dioxide, so the recovery will be led by massive public investment and subsidy for green power and green travel, partly paid for during transition by higher carbon taxes on those who do not embrace the revolution quickly enough.

It also welcomes the large expansion of state spending and intervention following WHO policies to combat the virus, and wishes to continue with policies of expanding the state workforce and spending more on state services. The IMF sees the NHS as a great model which others should adopt. Mr Biden wants to enrol a Public Health Corps and to extend Union rights to all public service employees, as well as expanding again public sector involvement in the affordable health care system pioneered by President Obama.

The politicians and political movements who disagree with some or all of this consensus are treated roughly by conventional media who by and large back the general view and protect it. So Mr Trump who went for cheap oil and gas and a big expansion of the energy sector to onshore oil and energy based industry was strongly attacked for his anti environment stance. He was then pilloried for his scepticism about long lock downs as a way of fighting the virus. Mr Bolsonaro in Brazil was slated for his casual approach to the pandemic . Even Sweden, once a poster country for the centre left, was criticised for being softer on lock down than the consensus.

In future blogs I will look at various policies that emerge from the Build Back better approach to see which ones could help and which will do harm.