

What is the point of a lock down?

The first national lock down was said to be for one main reason – to save the NHS. The NHS was short of Intensive care beds and breathing systems at a time when that was thought to be the only treatment for bad cases of CV 19.

The time of that lockdown was used to procure many more ventilators, to put in four large new Nightingale hospitals and to expand ICU capacity in existing hospitals. More nurses and doctors were hired, and recently retired qualified staff were tempted back to help with the crisis. The peak demand in April was comfortably accommodated by the NHS. Serious cases came down, though some argued the peak had been reached at or before the lock down started. As we went into summer with more Ultra violet light and warmer temperatures which both damage the virus case numbers stayed relatively low.

The lock down also gave the medical and scientific establishments more time to research the virus, to understand more about its transmission and its impact on infected people. As a result we now know than some steroids, anti virals and clot busting drugs can make a difference to serious cases and can save some lives.

Today we are told there needs to be an extensive “circuit breaker”. It’s a strange analogy, because of course a circuit breaker immediately cancels all dangerous power in a system, whereas a lock down does not immediately turn the virus off. When you put a circuit breaker back on full power is restored immediately, but what I assume these scientists want to do is to use a period of lock down to bring virus spread down, before resuming some relaxation which on their analysis will allow some drift back up. How does this help? How much relaxation would they allow and how much extra virus circulation would they find acceptable? Why are we not given measurable targets in advance so we can see what they are trying to achieve?

The advisers rightly warn us there may be no magic bullet or solution early next year in the form of a vaccine which offers full protection. This means the true question to answer is how do we live with this virus? What is the right mix of policy to keep the spread down, to protect the vulnerable, but to allow more jobs and activity than we currently enjoy?

It is no good the government imposing a whole new raft of controls over people’s daily lives if there is insufficient buy in by the public. To work people have to be persuaded it is necessary to follow the rules, and the rules have to be the minimum to keep virus spread down sensibly . What controls do you think are necessary?

Letter to BBC

Dear Director General

Congratulations on your appointment. I am glad you are reviewing the extent to which the BBC delivers the impartiality and public service content Licence fee payers pay for.

As someone who seeks to make a contribution to the main arguments over public policy, specialising in economic and constitutional matters, I find the BBC output is often biased against discussion and thoughtful consideration of views and attitudes that disagree with the conventional wisdom of the large corporations, civil service and international quango establishment. As examples I have in the past been denied access or time to explain the case against the ERM and features of the Euro which duly went on to do considerable economic damage, the case against so called independent central banks when they were in recession creating mode, to consider the opportunities given to nationalisms by devolution or to make the case to rescue industrial and agricultural market share lost during our years in the EU single market. I have written and published on these and other themes extensively and wish to discuss them in a true Reithian spirit of independent enquiry. Instead I have to listen to a propaganda channel which just assumes the establishment view of Euro policy, thinks the single market is always a net gain which we must not lose, that Central Banks are wise and right and the errors of economic policy are all the fault of governments, and favours lop sided devolution which must be encouraged. There is a reverence towards so called independent experts who are often political in their judgements and sometimes not even good experts in their fields with poor track records at forecasting.

I do not think the BBC reveal party political bias between Labour and the Conservatives. The interviewers are usually rightly tough on both parties. There is however systematic bias against England, with many voices representing Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and liberal reporting of the devolved governments with never any consideration of the views of England where most Licence fee payers live. There is no English radio or tv channel to redress the balance, unlike the other nations in the Union which have their own channels. No-one is ever allowed to speak for England. We are endlessly told Scotland voted to stay in the EU but never told England voted decisively to leave. The BBC follows the EU agenda of trying to break England into regional and city area governments, whilst leaving Scotland whole despite the anti Edinburgh tensions in places like the Shetlands and the differences between the Highlands and the main cities. I would appreciate the opportunity to have a conversation with you about global establishment bias throughout BBC output, which has left the BBC finding it very difficult to report sensibly on Brexit or Trump or other populist movements. I think the BBC needs to do a lot more to foster intelligent debate about these economic and constitutional matters, as it misses out on many of the conversations listeners and viewers are having on social media in frustration with their state Broadcaster.

The bias is also reflected in the way so called populist politicians and parties in office overseas are reported. I am neutral on the US election, as UK politicians should stay out of foreign elections and be willing to work with any democratically elected government that emerges in an ally. Listening and watching BBC output it regularly frames the election as the Democrats would wish, concentrating plenty of hostile fire on Trump and his supporters but never doing the same to Biden and his. Coverage of continental parties in government that are sceptical of EU policy is also usually more hostile in tone than coverage of pro EU parties. I look forward to meeting.

Yours sincerely

John Redwood

[Letter to the Home Secretary](#)

The tragic loss of life at sea near France this week has highlighted again the need to change policy in tackling illegal migration.

You have rightly condemned the actions of people smugglers. They take profit to put people at risk on dangerous boats and encourage them to break the law of the country they wish to enter. It would be good to know what more can be done to find and prosecute the people in France responsible for organising this vile trade.

The UK needs to reinforce your clear view that people should not attempt illegal entry through dangerous crossings in boats or by illegal and dangerous use of trucks and road vehicles with or without the knowledge of the drivers. To do so the courts need a new instruction from an Act of Parliament to help ensure there is no incitement to try the dangerous sea route or back of the lorry method with smugglers. No-one should be paying a people smuggler to evade the law and no-one should be funding and organising dangerous journeys for children.

The message has to go out that it is possible to become a refugee or economic migrant legally and safely. The UK should not accept any attempted illegal entry. The last thing we want to do is to send out a message that attempting illegal entry is likely to work as that would be an incentive to put more lives at risk. Too many have died at sea or in or on lorries already. Let's take action to save lives.

Guidance to commercial property owners

I recently received this answer to a Parliamentary Question from the Government:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has provided the following answer to your written parliamentary question (106880):

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to issue guidance to commercial property owners who wish to (a) improve or (b) modify their air flow, heating and air extraction systems to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. (106880)

Tabled on: 21 October 2020

Answer:

Paul Scully:

Evidence shows that proper ventilation can be used to mitigate the transmission risk of COVID-19, alongside other measures. Ventilation into the building should be optimised to ensure the maximum fresh air supply is provided to all areas of the facility wherever possible.

Our workplace guidance includes a number of steps that will usually be needed to ensure that ventilation systems provide a good supply of fresh air. It is important that businesses check whether ventilation systems need to be services or adjusted. If businesses and employers are unsure we advise they seek advice from their heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineers or advisers.

The workplace guidance broken down by business type/environment can be found here: www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19

The answer was submitted on 29 Oct 2020 at 12:43.

The EU believes in tariffs

There is a double irony in the Remain position on trade. They say a free trade agreement with the EU is crucial, whilst doing everything in their power to stop us having free trade agreements with all those other non EU countries who would like one . They pose as free traders, claiming tariffs are harmful, yet they fully support EU trade policy which makes use of very high tariffs on agricultural and food products to protect domestic farming and the food industry, and seeks to use a 10% tariff on non EU cars to help

single market producers.

So which is it? Is free trade essential to our future? Or do selective tariffs do good and protect domestic industries sensibly?

The theory of free trade tells us that a country is better off with free trade than with tariffs. If, however, you take this to the logical conclusion that you might as well surrender all your tariffs with no reciprocation from overseas you may well find domestic industries damaged by aggressive overseas competition, to be followed by price hikes once the domestic industry has been demolished. Arguably the West has been too generous to China, offering low or no tariffs under WTO rules whilst allowing China to maintain big protectionist barriers of various kinds. UK industry lost out badly when we went to zero tariffs against German and other continental steel, car and textile manufacturers in the 1970s.

I favour bilateral or multilateral reduction of tariffs and other barriers. As we leave the EU's single market and customs union we are free to choose tariffs or no tariffs, and to decide how high they should be. The only proviso is we need to impose the same tariff on all WTO members, unless they have a Free Trade Agreement with us. In the case of food it means we can lower tariffs on non EU countries whilst imposing some tariff on EU food, which will act as a stimulus to recapture market share for domestic producers lost over our years in the CAP and Customs Union.

So let us once and for all get rid of the silly lies put around about trade

1 We can trade well and grow our trade without a Free Trade Agreement, as we have done during our time in the EU with non EU countries

2 Tariff free does not guarantee good trade growth, as have seen in recent years within the tariff free single market in the EU

3, Most Free Trade Agreements are useful and can add a bit to trade.

4. Lop sided trade agreements can be damaging, as our EU has been to our farming and fishing industries.