

The Prime Movers behind the Global Warming Scare: Margaret Thatcher and the Rise of the Climate Ruse

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Introduction

Contrary to perception, largely sustained by opponents of the Climate Change campaign, this campaign was never the handiwork of some vast leftist conspiracy. Rather, the prime movers behind the Global Warming scare were a coterie of centre-right politicians such as: German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, US President George Bush Sr., Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and above all others, Britain’s Margaret Thatcher. This paper recounts Britain’s domestic war on coal, focussing on Thatcher’s formative role; and drawing on archival information released pursuant to the 30-year rule. The paper surveys Thatcher’s substantial exertions to take the fight against the Global Warming phantom into the global arena; and concludes with commentary on Thatcher’s legacy and revisionist final writings.

Background

Britain’s first public coal-fired electricity generator lit-up London’s Holborn Viaduct in 1882. By the late-1940s an electrified Britain drew 90% of its power from coal-fired plants. Britain’s first nuclear power plant came online in 1957. Its primary purpose was manufacturing bomb fuel.

Circa 1920 Britain’s coal industry employed 1 million. This workforce shrank considerably before Prime Minister Atlee’s Labour government effectively nationalized the industry in 1947. By the early-1970s the National Union of Miners (NUM) represented 300,000 coal miners.

NUM’s ability to starve powerplants handed them the hammer during negotiations. NUM’s

stunning 1974 victory toppled Prime Minister Heath's Conservative government.

Mechanization whittled NUM membership during the 1970s; but NUM's clout ensured redundancies were consensual, impacted the oldest workers, and came with offers of alternative employment. By decade's end coal mining employed 200,000, with 90% being NUM members.

NUM's rank-and-file were militant. Its leadership was socialist. Britain had other unions with similar dispositions but NUM was the strongest. To the Conservative Party's historic base (the landed estate) NUM appeared as an existential threat.

Viscount Ridley's second son, Nicholas, drafted a blueprint for destroying NUM in 1977. Implementing the Ridley Plan became the *raison d'être* of the secretive elitist Selsdon Group. Core stratagems:

- a) stockpile coal at powerplants prior to the cathartic conflict;
- b) install generators with a capacity to burn either coal or oil, even if uneconomical;
- c) import coal; and,
- d) deploy massive police repression against NUM picketers.

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (r. May 1979 to November 1990) placed Selsdon Group henchman, John Redwood, atop her omnipotent "Policy Unit."

The 1984-5 Miner's Strike

Britain's bitterest labour dispute, the 1984-5 Miners' Strike, redefined industrial relations. Documents released pursuant to the 30-year-rule clarify the Strike's history. At the Strike's outset top government officials told Police Chiefs to adopt a "*vigorous interpretation of their duties*." Some 9,000 officers were reassigned from 46 separate police forces to Nottingham's battlefields alone. (1)

Image on the right: A badge produced by Kent NUM in support of the miners' strike (Licensed under CC0)



Following sporadic unofficial local strikes over pay and closures, on March 6, 1984, NUM's

Yorkshire Area invoked a 1981 strike mandate regarding closures, and walked out. On March 12, the Strike became official and national. No national vote was held. The Strike was endorsed and managed at the Area level.

The only nationally coordinated action, the Battle of Orgreave (June 18, 1984), saw 5,000 pickets face an unparalleled assemblage of 6,000 police, complete with horses and dogs. Police commanders expressed determination to *“teach the miners a lesson.”* The ensuing clash injured 72 officers and 51 miners.

Weeks later, after dockers struck, John Redwood drafted a secret memo outlining an imminent declaration of martial law and the dispatching of Army troops to smash picket-lines and deliver coal. He configured the Strike as a communist revolution. Thatcher seriously considered imposing martial law. (2)

A craving to crush NUM consumed Thatcher. Her frantic scribbles embroider the margins of cabinet documents and internal communiques. She underlined every second word. She agonised over minute details of coal shipments. (3)

Thatcher castigated union leaders as *“the enemy within.”* While Thatcherites contend this statement was an isolated slip aimed exclusively at top NUM officials, subsequently released documents reveal Thatcher used the term *“enemy”* regularly and directed this epithet broadly at elected union officials. NUM’s Arthur Scargill had been elected by a large majority. Thatcher wanted Scargill et al charged with sedition. (4)



Miners’ strike rally in London, 1984 (Licensed under CC BY 2.0)

Thatcher misled both miners and public by claiming she planned to close only the 20 most uneconomic collieries. Documents betray a settled intention to destroy Britain’s coal industry starting with 75 closures and 55,000 layoffs before 1987. When Scargill exposed this plan, the media mocked him.

Enter the Climate Ruse

In the 1970s, British Foreign Office mandarin, Sir Crispin Tickell, took sabbatical to study climatology at Harvard and to write *Climate Change and World Affairs* – on the perils of *global cooling*. At the outset of the 1984 Miners' Strike, Tickell recommended Thatcher explore Climate Change as a promising anti-coal pretext. (5) Thatcher invited Tickell to Number 10. Tickell advised Thatcher from 1984 onwards. (6)

Thatcher had been meeting pro-nuclear activist Sir James Lovelock since at least 1984. Lovelock's *Gaia, A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford, 1979) became a must-read for members of Britain's intelligentsia requiring a primer on eco-apocalypticisms like Climate Change. Lovelock patronised Supporters of Nuclear Energy, a group established by Thatcher's confidante and press secretary, Sir Bernard Ingham – later a lobbyist for British Nuclear Fuels. (7)

The June 1984 G7 Summit, hosted by Thatcher in London, concluded with a statement mentioning "*Climate Change*." Respective enviro-ministers were told to report back to the May 1985 G7 meeting at Bonn, whereat Climate Change emerged as an official agenda item. Climate Change's archvillains were oil and coal.

Official arguments for closing British collieries mainly elicited classical liberal economics. The National Coal Board complained of losing 3 pounds per tonne. International coal prices were 25% cheaper than British coal and so on. Putting the lie to this rationale was the fact that Thatcher's proffered alternative to coal, i.e., nuclear power, required far greater state subsidies than did British coal.

The Strikers' Defeat

While Thatcher's climateers enjoyed catered confabs, British police peppered roadways with check-points to thwart solidarity pickets. Police intercepted 165,000 pickets in the Strike's first 6 months. Over the course of the Strike police arrested 11,300 NUM members. Some 190 went to prison. Police later confessed to have, in one Area alone, victimised 39 strikers with false imprisonment/malicious prosecution tactics.

Ten thousand miners got sacked. Thatcher saw to it that no families of striking miners received welfare benefits, regardless of the extremities of their destitution. A covert campaign of funding breakaway unions complimented a shadier campaign of infiltration and bribery. MI-5 tapped NUM leaders' phones. A quasi-totalitarian media chanted lies about stolen union funds and subsidies from Qadhafi. Erstwhile union-friendly papers like *The Guardian* and *Daily Mirror* joined the choir.

The Strike ended March 3, 1985 with NUM defeated. Wild-cats stoppages and reprisals against picket-line crossers persisted past 1986.

The Strike's outcome constituted a crucial, but nonetheless, preliminary triumph. Full victory demanded annihilating British coal; an entire industry High Tories wrote off as incorrigibly wracked with worker defiance. Climate Change became the official pretext for the continued prosecution of the war on coal.

Thatcher expands the Climate Campaign

In 1987 Thatcher appointed Sir Crispin Tickell as Britain's UN Ambassador and, informally, as her Global Warming envoy. Twice she summoned Tickell back from New York for personal consultation. She also summoned her Cabinet to Number 10 for Global Warming briefings with select scientists. Ministers were to listen, not talk. (8)

In New York, Tickell pressed for a new UN agency missioned to persuade governments to tax fossil fuels and subsidize renewable energy. (9) Tickell's efforts led to the 1990 founding of the International Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change (INC-FCCC) – the forerunner of the de facto world headquarters of the climate campaign: the UN-FCCC.

In September 1988 Thatcher delivered a climate lecture (penned by Tickell) to Britain's august Royal Society. She addressed Ozone Holes, Acid Rain and Global Warming. Action had begun against Acid Rain (i.e., hobbling coal-power at great expense). Her climate comments were equivocal. On one hand, the carbon-induced "*global heat trap*" was presumed factual. Thatcher bemoaned the 3 billion tonnes of CO₂ polluting the skies annually. She claimed the 5 hottest years of the 20th century happened in the 1980s. On the other hand, the speech's most celebrated passage detailed calamities which might occur if warming hit 1 degree Celsius *per decade*. She did not say such warming was occurring; but that is how the media ran it (presumably with collusion). Thatcher went on to stress Global Warming's implications for energy and forest policy. She talked up her climate research programs and the fact that Britain hosted one of the four nodes of global climate analysis. (10)

With Thatcher's integral support the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) co-launched the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in November 1988.

In a 1989 BBC special (*The Greening of Mrs. Thatcher*) Thatcher named protecting Earth's climate as her top priority.

In Thatcher's keynote address to the Conservative Party's 1989 Conference, she bragged about her global climate leadership; especially of her having laid the groundwork for a UN climate framework. (11)

Thatcher's December 1989 address to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) captured world attention. She warned of "*vast increases of carbon dioxide*" and related perils. She held out nuclear power as "*the most environmentally safe form of energy.*" Her main recommendations concerned tropical forests; because jungles "*fix carbon*" better than temperate groves. She tossed in the desiccationist acorn: "*without trees there is no rain.*" She pitched an international bio-diversity convention focussed on the tropics; noting how her administration already funded forest protection in 20 countries. After showcasing Cambridge's Polar Institute and the British Antarctic Survey, Thatcher read aloud a letter from a British scientist aboard a ship in the Antarctic Ocean. He apparently possessed hard evidence of human-induced climate change. Thinning sea ice foretold runaway warming. Thatcher then crowed about her generous patronage of ocean circulation research and of her doubling Britain's contribution to UNEP. Britain and her European allies had pooled money for climate monitoring satellites.

Britain had poured 2 billion pounds into combating Acid Rain. Thatcher implored the UN General Assembly to:

- a) extend the IPCC's mandate;
- b) create a global framework on Climate Change;
- c) impose binding protocols on CO2 emissions; and
- d) invest in climate computer modeling.

She concluded by boasting about how British expertise piloted IPCC research. (12)

At Thatcher's behest the Meteorological Office established the computer savvy Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research, which Thatcher personally opened in 1990. Her ribbon-cutting speech (written by Sir John Houghton) debuted Britain's target of cutting projected CO2 levels by 30% by 2005. Under Sir John's supervision the Hadley Centre selected lead authors for the IPCC's Scientific Working Group and provided the IPCC with basic data. (13) Hadley became the IPCC's pivotal agency – schooling scholars the world over. (14)

In November 1990 Thatcher begged World Climate Conference attendees to stop treating the atmosphere as a dustbin. She beatified nuclear power and diabolised coal. Precautionary climate action was urgent, she explained, because “*greenhouse gases*” accumulate for centuries; and because Climate Change might be worse than computer model predictions. Brits would have to wrestle their emissions back down to 1990 levels by 2005. Forestry being key, her government gave princely sums to 30 countries to protect, and plant, trees. EC climate accords had to be emulated globally. A WMO/UNEP supervised framework, based on IPCC research, had to be signed by 1992. (15)

Throughout 1990, Thatcher agitated for a mega-confab celebrating the 20th anniversary of the 1972 Stockholm Conference. This agitation manifested in the (in)famous June 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (aka “Rio” or “Earth” Summit).

While Thatcher revelled in her role as global climate crier, coal's share of British electricity generation sat stubbornly at 70%. Thatcher had yet to slay her own coal dragon. Her lance was nuclear. Her mentor lay across the Channel. Eighty percent of French electricity came from nuclear plants; compared to 20% in Britain. While financial data concerning the cost effectiveness of nuclear power was occluded by its overlay with warhead production, revelations during the 1989 *Electricity Act* talks suggested nuclear power was 4 times more expensive than coal-fired power. (16) Wind power, circa 1989, was airy fairy.

Estranged Thatcherite, Lord Nigel Lawson, shares the thesis that Thatcher's climateeering was a ruse for a coal phase-out. Lawson, however, interpolates North Sea gas into 1980s strategizing. The Dash for Gas, however, seems a 1990s improvisation. When Thatcher departed No. 10, Britain gas powered under 0.1% of British electricity and combined cycle gas turbines had yet to grace British soil.

(Lord Lawson is hardly the only insider acknowledging Thatcher's climate clamour camouflaged an attack on coal. Darwall's *The Age of Global Warming* notes that even elite pro-Warmers share this view. Delingpole's *Watermelons*, whilst sheltering Thatcher idolatry, concedes that many Brits believe Thatcher championed Climate Change for anti-NUM

purposes.)

Thatcher's Legacy

In her swansong, *Statecraft* (2002), Thatcher swaddles herself in a classical liberal shroud. She suddenly spies anti-capitalist designs behind the Climate Change campaign. With *Statecraft* Thatcher sought to rescue her conservative legacy by flip-flopping on climate without confessing her crimes. The defects in the Global Warming hypothesis she tallies in *Statecraft* were obvious in the 1980s when she was the loudest Global Warming cheerleader. *Statecraft* spares not a line for the political economy of coal-fired electricity (but finds 10 pages for defending Pinochet). (17)

Thatcher's legacy lives on vividly in corrupted science. She directed science councils to fund climate hysteria (which cost nothing as overall research budgets contracted under her reign). By 1990 climate money flooded UK universities, carrying off branches of science like twigs in a torrent. Her Hadley Centre has since yielded 2,200 peer-reviewed climate alarmist publications and continues to supply lead authors and coordinators to the IPCC. Hadley boasts state-of-the-art computers. Hadley, and the Met Office which oversees it, employ 200 climate scientists. Hadley partners with 1,700 institutions including Oxford's Climate Research Network (170 scientists) and East Anglia's Climate Research Unit (40 scientists). In 2021-2 PM Boris Johnson shovelled 440 million pounds at climate research. (18)

Thatcher's legacy also lives on in the UNFCCC, in the IPCC, in emissions targets, in climate scaremongering and most tangibly in Britain's relentless war on coal – a project every succeeding British Conservative Prime Minister resolutely supported.

In 1984 Britain's 174 collieries included many bountiful deep mines. In 1994 fifteen deep mines operated. By 2009 six remained. The last deep colliery closed December 2015. Between 1990 and 2020 domestic British coal production fell from 93 million tonnes to 1.7 million tonnes.

In 1990 coal consumption, from both domestic and foreign sources, stood at 108 million tonnes. By 2020 this figure had fallen to around 7 million tonnes. (This coal is used for making coke, melting metal, and generating electricity.) Britain imports between 4.5 and 6 million tonnes a year. The 2 million tonnes Brits burned for electricity in 2019 came entirely from Venezuela.

In 1990 gross electricity generation in Britain was 319.7 TWh. By source this quantum (minus hydro and oil) broke down as follows:

- a) Coal 229.9 TWh
- b) Nuclear 63.2 TWh
- c) Gas 0.4 TWh
- d) Wind, Solar and other (non-hydro) "renewables" – 0.0 TWh (19)

In 2020 Britain produced 312 TWh of electricity from the following main sources:

- a) Coal 5.5 TWh

b) Nuclear 50.3 TWh

c) Gas 111.4 TWh

d) Wind, Solar and other “renewables” – 127.8 TWh (20)

Between 2000 and 2020 gross coal tonnage burned for electricity generation fell 95%. (21)

Between 2000 and 2020 coal-fired generating capacity dropped from 25 GW to 5 GW. In 2014 generating capacity from all sources was 85 GW. Triumphant coal-plant implosions have reduced this to 76 GW.

In 2020 the Electrical Systems Operator (ESO) exploited Covid lockdown-induced declines in electricity demand to selectively take plants off-line. Of course, Britain’s final 4 remaining operational coal-fired plants were the first to be temporarily stilled. This accounts for wind providing 28.8% of power in 2020. Pre-Covid, wind supplied 13%.

In 2020 solar supplied 4.4% of power, hydro supplied 1.6%, and 6.5% came from biomass (imported wood pellets). These numbers held steady from 2019.

In 2019 nuclear power generated 20% of UK electricity. In Covid-distorted 2020 it generated 17%. Nuclear’s market share peaked in 1997 at 26%.

Gas’s market share fluctuates between 35% and 43%. Over half the gas burned in Britain is imported.

Britain imported 5.4% of its electricity in 2020. Imports held an 8.8% market share in 2019. Half these imports come through France. Other interconnections extend from Belgium and Holland. Britain is now the world’s sixth largest electricity importer.

Between April 10 and June 16, 2021 Brit’s celebrated completely coal-free electricity. From June 18 onward wrought another 55 day period of coal-free power. (22) The ESO anticipates absolute coal phase-out by 2025. Disruptions resulting from the Russo-Ukrainian War may delay the fulfilment of this dream.

Conclusion

The High Tory party line claims electricity from British coal simply had to be phased-out because British coal had become uneconomic and overly subsidy-dependent. Coal’s replacements however, such as nuclear, wind and solar, receive ludicrous subsidies. Regarding wind and solar much of these subsidies flow into the coffers of wealthy rural landowners. Is it subsidies per se; or is it to whom subsidies are paid?

Imported electricity, and electricity derived from imported coal, gas, uranium and wood pellets account for over half the electricity consumed in Britain. If Britain returned to domestic coal-fired electricity this money would swish around the national economy. The Tory landed interest would rather pour money into the sea than seeing it flow through the British workforce.

Depending on one’s definition of “economically recoverable,” Britain’s coal reserves range from 4 to 187 billion tonnes. Said figures do not count the trillion-tonne cornucopia of coal just off Scotland’s northern shore.

Recommendation

Mine Britannia's coal reserves to geological exhaustion!

Blaze every crumb to cinders in British power plants!

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