



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on October 6, 2023

Greenies Want to Steal Your Car — That’s the New Culture War

The car has long been the central target of the greentopian climate alarmists. Yet given that road transport, including trucking, accounts for only 12 percent of global CO₂ emissions — and that electric cars require power often derived from coal-fired plants and have “dirty” supply chains — why has the auto become such a greentopian bugbear?

Clearly, the car is far more than a perceived environmental threat, but has become the object of a greentopian (im)moral crusade. In fact, as *The Wall Street Journal’s* Joseph C. Sternberg [put it](#) yesterday, it has become the “mother of all culture wars.” Why, one could even say that this battle between the common man who drives and the uncommon man who’d drive us to autocracy is, pun intended, where the rubber hits the road.



Henk-Jan Winkeldermaat/flickr

Historical Perspective

In 1894, *The Times* (in Britain) predicted, “In 50 years, every street in London will be buried under nine feet of manure.” The idea was that horse “pollution” was already a problem in burgeoning, post-Industrial-Revolution Western cities and, with their human and equine populations continuing to grow, just imagine the excrementitious future ahead. Largely unforeseen was that by 1944, the horse would have been replaced by its modern-day equivalent: the car.

Yet a horse, many would say, was far more than just utilitarian. In fact, “Horses are a universal symbol of freedom without restraint, as horse riding makes people feel they can free themselves from their own limitations and float into adventure, movement and desire,” [writes](#) the blog Everything About Horses. Are autos any different?

“Cars have long been symbols for personal freedom,” [pointed out](#) *Scientific American* in 2013. “With the open road before you you can go anywhere—from behind the wheel you really take control of your destiny. In this regard, cars are empowering. Ownership means that you have the means to be independently mobile, that you own not just a vehicle but choice as well.”

For sure. An elderly woman I know who can no longer drive herself around often laments how she now doesn’t feel free. Locomotion of any kind is a kind of liberty, which is why someone robbed of the power to walk may feel “trapped” in a wheelchair. It’s why we have wheelchairs in the first place, and now electric ones, as the mobility they offer beats being stuck in a normal chair. In the locomotive dimension, you’re only as free as your ability to move and travel about.

So what is this attack on the car all about? (It’s nothing new, mind you: 20 years ago, enviro-terrorists



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would sometimes [vandalize or burn SUVs](#) because of their supposed “climate impact.”) The aforementioned Sternberg has some idea, writing that

the car is a focus for the war on carbon because it’s so visible. An electric vehicle is the most conspicuous, although perhaps not the most effective, thing a household can do in service of reducing global emissions. The corollary, however, is that if a household insists on buying and driving a gasoline or diesel car, it signifies that some concern other than climate is more important—cost and convenience often at the top of the list.

The car is becoming a cultural flashpoint because it is where climate-apocalypse proselytizing meets antielitist pragmatism. Both sides increasingly understand their fundamental values are at stake.

The left has received several warnings already about the resulting culture-war dangers. In France, Emmanuel Macron’s administration was derailed in 2018 by yellow-vest protests in rural areas occasioned by a tax increase on diesel fuel. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s rickety coalition government was shaken in 2022 by a fierce debate over speed limits on the autobahn proposed partially for climate reasons. The U.K.’s Labour Party this summer narrowly lost a parliamentary by-election it was expected to win, when voters lodged a protest against a Labour-imposed tax on older cars in greater London.

Sternberg proceeds to say that while conservatives had typically argued against the anti-car agenda on economic or scientific grounds, this may be changing. He cites British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his Tories, who are underdogs in next year’s elections. Sunak is leaning heavily into an internal-combustion-engine defense, having scaled back an electric-car mandate, canceled a high-profile high-speed rail line, and said that government’s priority should now be road repair.

This is greentopian heresy because the Left hates roads, as they facilitate auto travel. But “Sunak is attempting to put himself on the side of households and businesses that value the freedom of cheap mobility more,” writes Sternberg — “and for whom cheap mobility is a matter of economic survival.”

And this brings us back to the past. Consider that horse thievery was severely punished historically — being a capital offense in many cultures — because without “a horse, travel, farming, and ranching were virtually impossible,” [writes](#) author Jennifer Bohnhoff. “A person who stole a horse left his victim unable to support himself and unable to move on. In the Old West, the saying was that if you stole a man’s horse, you had condemned him to death.”

This is why, Bohnhoff also informs, the “term ‘horse thief’ is used not only for people who literally steal horses, but as an insult, implying that the person has no moral decency whatsoever.”

So given that the car is today’s horse, perhaps in this culture war the greentopians should be viewed likewise: They are modern-day horse thieves — only, without the guts. After all, they aim to outsource their thievery and impoverishment of others, letting the government do the dirty work.



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