



Swarms, refugees and migrants all welcome?

By Mark Iddon

An abandoned meat van on the main road to Vienna was discovered this week to have contained 71 bodies presumed to be Syrian refugees who had died from suffocation having left from Hungary on Wednesday. In the last year it is estimated that 2500 people have died trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea from North Africa trying to get to Europe in inadequate boats.

Last month the port of Calais in France was besieged by migrants who numbered in hundreds on some nights trying to find a way of getting to the UK by climbing onto a train or lorry or entering the channel tunnel. These are incredibly perilous journeys with a distinct possibility of death en route, being sent to a detention centre or back to wherever they were fleeing from.

The UK seeks to control its borders and maintain control of who is entering and leaving the country. Successive governments have competed to show how incompetent the other parties are at controlling borders and explain how they would manage them better. David Cameron, Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader entered a battle of words in early August when he

described the migrants at Calais as a swarm. Many liberal commentators including Harriet Harman, the acting leader of the Labour Party, have said how dehumanising it was to refer to refugees in this way before stating that more must be done to shore up the borders.

We are aware of the troubles and war zones in many countries and many are sympathetic of the plight of those that have fled their country in the hope of reaching a safe place to live. The internet platform for Change.org has a petition for the BBC to use the term 'refugee crisis' rather than 'migrant crisis' arguing that terminology is important in order to address the relevant issues. It seems that the argument over words and terminology has sidelined the political debate over the case for free movement or border restrictions. In making a case for support for those who are fleeing horrific circumstances, whether war, ISIS or punishment from an authoritarian government.

The Conservatives pledged in the run up to the general election in May that they would reduce net migration down to tens of thousands a year, from the hundreds of thousands at the present, but they were embarrassed by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) report that the net migration for 2014 was 318,000, just below the previous peak at 320,000 during 2005. David Cameron said over the Calais crisis that the problem was with people traffickers who were making money out of vulnerable people convincing them that they could take them to a better life in the UK. Theresa May, Conservative Party Home Secretary has said that she will move to deny people entry to the UK unless they have a job lined up and that there would be limits on overseas graduates staying in the UK following graduation.

What is missing from this debate however is a debate over the freedom of movement across borders whether to better your circumstances, prosperity or opportunity. This is quite bazaar as many people do not see the contradiction that they may want a better life say in Australia or as many of my friends have moved to Dubai, India, South Africa or China in search of employment because the UK economy is in crisis.

The idea that people come to the UK to claim benefits does not stack up when people have risked so much to get here that it doesn't make sense that they will be idle but hard working people determined to contribute to the economy and community. The distinction between the terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' is made to separate those who deserve our pity and those who come for their own economic benefit, and seems to me to be most unhelpful as it sets up migrants as problematic and to be excluded through some mechanism or other.

Some might say that the UK economy is just not in good shape and that we can't afford for people to come to Britain when there just aren't enough jobs and houses and the schools and hospitals are in desperate need of improvement. There is a perception that too many people are the problem but this is to misunderstand the reality. It is people who are the potential solution. With more people there is more man power, creativity, skills and enterprise and therefore greater productive potential.

An underlying factor leading to fears around the issue of migration are borne out of the limits of production of our present system where our leaders lack vision, initiative, authority and leadership. It is the challenge to the limits of production which really needs to be addressed.

Wanting a better life in more comfortable circumstances with greater material benefit and opportunities for our children is what we have in common with the swarms of migrants and refugees. By making them welcome we pose a threat to those whose only ambition is to cling on to the reins of power using scare stories to divide and rule over us.

Abolish border controls and let them all in for greater freedom, prosperity in pursuit of determining our own future.