

Chilled



by Theodore Dalrymple

The *Guardian* newspaper recently ran a story about a library in Suffolk where, among others, “young families, restaurant workers and a former NHS cleaner” were taking refuge from the cold. They couldn’t afford to heat their homes because energy prices have risen so steeply in the last few months. Such “warm banks”—that is to say, heated public spaces where people may go to keep warm—are springing up everywhere.

As one would expect from the *Guardian*, there is not much reflection on why a lack of heating should now threaten the health and well-being of millions of people in Britain in a more immediate way than global warming ever has, or what policies have led to this crisis in a country with ample, though unexploited, energy resources.

According to a recent paper in *The Lancet*, deaths attributable to excess heat in England and Wales between 2000 and 2019 numbered 791, while those attributable to excess cold numbered

60,573–80 times as many. Nor is Britain the only country in which the threat to health from cold is much greater than that from heat. A previous paper in the same journal found this to be a worldwide phenomenon. What is certain is that restrictive policies with regard to energy resources and exploration such as those followed by successive British governments, cowed by middle-class ecological warriors and perhaps influenced in another way by special interest groups, will lead in the near future to many preventable deaths, if they are not already doing so.

Whatever the cause of people not having enough money to keep warm in their homes may be, they deserve commiseration and relief from their distress if possible. Nevertheless, the *Guardian's* choice of illustrative case was both odd and revealing:

One woman came in [to the library] with her daughter, 10, and explained very straightforwardly that she was there to use the free internet access on the library computers, hoping to sell some of her belongings because she was short of money as a result of becoming re-addicted to crack cocaine, after managing not to use it for 15 years. Her daughter was very hungry, and happily ate free soup and toast offered by volunteers. Staff invited them back for a Christmas party later in the month.

No mention of the girl's father, of course; to mention him in such a story would have been in the worst possible taste. It would have suggested that male parents had, perhaps, some responsibility toward their offspring. As all right-thinking people now agree, the state is and ought to be the true father to the child, apart from the act of insemination.

In the *Guardian* view of the world, the mother was doubly a victim: first of poverty, then of addiction. No wonder that she had only money enough for crack cocaine, but none left

over for food or heating! It would be horribly censorious to apportion any blame to her: indeed, the case is a test. If the thought that she was not a very good parent so much as occurred to you, even fleetingly, you are a monster of illiberal unfeelingness. At least *Guardian* readers can keep warm this winter on the knowledge of their own goodness.

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