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# Luddite loons on the loose [1]

Written by **Tim Worstall** [2] | Friday 6 January 2012

The Guardian often does us proud in bringing us economic lunacy dressed up as viable or well intentioned concern for people or the planet. But this one really takes the biscuit [3]:

> Good disciples of Adam Smith would welcome small farms and small shops, too, because Smith's "invisible hand", which ensures fair play, works best if there's a host of providers, and doesn't work at all if there aren't. But the dogmas of today are those of "finance capitalism", based on hypothetical money that is merely deemed to exist, which gave us the bubble that has now burst; and of neoliberalism, the so-called "free" global market, which demands ruthless, all-against-all competition (unless, of course, you compete well enough to fix the rules).

Yes, well done there, missing the point that the aim of having a host of providers is so that we get ruthless all-against-all competition. Very well done that man.

But it gets even better:

> If economists were concerned with on-the-ground reality they'd see that Britain now needs a million more farmers ? at least 10 times the number at present; closer to 10% of the workforce than today's 1%.

The UK has some 15 million acres of arable land which means that each farmer would be trying to live off the product of 15 acres of arable land (yes, I know, there's pasture etc as well but I'm trying to keep this simple). Wheat yields are around 3 tonnes an acre, wheat is worth, at current bubble prices, perhaps £200 per tonne. 3x15x200 gives us £9,000 a year.

That's total income into the business of course. We've not paid for seed, machinery, fertiliser or anything at all yet. And it's no good saying we'll all go organic and horse drawn for we'll have to use a large portion of that wheat to feed the animals to get the dung to make the fertiliser. And you need an acre to feed a plough horse and so on. So what we're really saying with this sized farming is that farmers will be earning perhaps £1,000 a year if they're lucky. Or, of course, if all farmers should be making decent livings, say median income, because we're nice people like that then wheat has to go up to what, £1,000 a tonne or something? Which will do the price of bread a great deal of good won't it?

In short, this suggestion condemns a million people and their families to peasantry or the rest of the country to penury. Just think, we've hundreds of days yet left in this year but already the Guardian has a hot favourite for idiot suggestion of the year.

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