

The End of the Line: Why Fear Turns into Division – and Where Real Hope Lives

Adam Tugwell | 12 June 2026



There is a fear moving quietly through communities right now. It rarely speaks in its own voice. Instead, it hides behind the anger of a few who have found the words - or simply the volume - to express what others feel but cannot articulate.

These louder voices capture the mood, but they also distort it. They promise actions that sound decisive but would lead to consequences that nobody, not even they, would truly want to see.

Beneath the rhetoric, beneath the shouting, beneath the slogans, something far more human is happening: **people are scared**. Scared of losing control. Scared of losing stability. Scared of losing the sense that tomorrow will look anything like today.

And fear, when it has no safe outlet, becomes anger. Anger becomes division. Division becomes a story that writes itself faster than anyone can intervene.

This is the landscape into which the rest of this argument unfolds.

The Paradox at the Heart of the Borders Debate

If we all thought the same way, we wouldn't need borders. But removing borders doesn't make us think the same.

For years, open borders were framed as a moral project - a sign of compassion, progress, and unity.

But the moral story was only half the truth. The other half was structural: a system that works best when people are **interchangeable, mobile, and measurable**.

This wasn't a conspiracy. It was the predictable outcome of **system incentives, elite insulation, and economic convenience**.

The System's Logic: Sameness Over Humanity

The modern economic model rewards:

- **standardisation**
- **predictability**
- **labour mobility**
- **measurable behaviour**

Borders, identities, and cultural differences introduce friction. Friction costs money.

So a moral narrative was built to justify removing them. But there was another narrative too - one dressed in the language of economic freedom.

Open borders were presented as a natural extension of free-market ideology:

“People should be free to move to where the best opportunities are.”

But this masked a harsher reality.

The same system that celebrated mobility was also **hollowing out local economies, decimating stable jobs, and eroding the foundations of community life.**

For many, “freedom to move” wasn’t freedom at all - it was compulsion. It was the only way to survive in places where the system had already extracted everything of value.

This wasn’t liberation. It was displacement disguised as choice.

The Collapse of the Moral Story

For a while, the story held. People felt generous because they could afford to. They could believe the narrative because their own lives were stable enough to cushion the strain.

But as the extractive logic deepened - **stagnant wages, rising costs, housing pressure, service strain** - the emotional equation changed.

People who once felt open now feel squeezed. People who once felt tolerant now feel unheard. People who once felt secure now feel precarious.

And when people feel precarious, they stop believing in stories.

Victims Scapegoating Victims

This is the tragedy unfolding now.

Real debate has been held hostage by a moral framework that punishes honesty. Communities that needed space to talk about pressure were told their concerns were unacceptable. And so the pressure built in silence, until it found release in resentment.

The people suffering most are turning on each other - not because they are bad, but because they are the only ones within reach.

And this includes immigrants themselves. Many did not move out of aspiration but out of necessity - pushed by the same economic forces that hollowed out communities here. They, too, are victims of a system that treats people as units of labour rather than human beings with roots, identities, and limits.

This is **horizontal conflict**: victims blaming victims while the system that created the pressure remains untouched.

The Tripwire: Polarisation Meets Material Fragility

Polarisation alone would be difficult enough. But we are now facing something far more dangerous: **polarisation at the exact moment that the material foundations of daily life are becoming fragile.**

- **food supply risks**

- **fuel insecurity**
- **infrastructure strain**

These are not abstract concerns. They are real vulnerabilities that could escalate quickly.

When communities are divided and the basics of life become uncertain, societies don't unify. They harden. They defend what little they have left. They become reactive, suspicious, and emotionally entrenched.

And leaders - insulated, abstracted, and often unaware of the second-order effects of their own decisions - misread the moment entirely.

There is no good reason to believe anyone intended to create unrest. But intention is irrelevant when detachment blinds you to reality.

The Limits of Political Hope

People need hope. Hope is psychological oxygen.

But the usual sources of hope - elections, slogans, promises - are exhausted.

A new government cannot fix problems that are the end links in a chain of causality stretching back decades.

These crises are not policy errors. They are not ideological accidents. They are the predictable outcomes of a system that extracted too much, ignored too much, and moralised too much.

Hope cannot come from the same structures that created the conditions we're now living through.

Where Hope Actually Lives

Real hope - the kind that survives pressure - comes from somewhere else entirely.

It comes from people rejecting external validation. From individuals looking inward, accepting who they are, and grounding themselves in something real. From communities rebuilding trust at the human scale. From decisions made by people who live with the consequences of those decisions. From neighbours, not narratives. From relationships, not rhetoric. From the local, not the abstract.

This is **skin in the game** - the missing ingredient in modern life.

It isn't anti-system. It's post-system. A return to the scale at which human beings actually function.

The Path Forward

We cannot undo the chain of causality that brought us here. We cannot reverse decades of extraction with a single election. We cannot heal polarisation by pretending it isn't real.

But we can rebuild from the ground up.

We can rediscover who we are. We can reconnect with the people around us. We can create pockets of stability in a world that feels increasingly unstable. We can make decisions together, locally, with accountability and humanity. We can stop waiting for permission from systems that no longer understand us.

And in doing so, we can create the only kind of hope that survives pressure:

Hope rooted in people, not promises. Hope rooted in community, not rhetoric.

Hope rooted in the human scale, where life actually happens.

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