Don’t Buy A Used Car From This Man

Big kerfluffle over the weekend concerning remarks by right-wing Harvard Professor Niall Ferguson, who claimed that Keynesian economics is not concerned about the future because Keynes himself was gay and didn’t have children. Now, not only is this bigoted, but it is untrue on its own terms: Keynes was married, he was childless because his wife had a tragic miscarriage, and the man himself was deeply committed to future generations; he wrote an essay called “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren.”

To his credit, Ferguson has apologized. To his discredit — and thus, a reason not to take his apology at face value — he has a history of homophobic comments and bizarre statements touching on race, not to mention serious intellectual dishonesty and a complete failure to have his economic predictions come true. Could it get any worse?

Yes! It turns out that Ferguson has also slandered those concerned with climate change as modern-day eugenics advocates. Referring to infamous eugenics advocate Francis Galton, Ferguson commented:

> The important point to note is that 100 years ago, work like Galton’s was at the cutting edge of scientific research. Racism wasn’t some backward-looking reactionary ideology: it was the state of the art and people then believed in it as readily as people today buy the theory of man-made climate change.

This is a classic smear tactic. If pressed, I’m sure Ferguson would say, “I’m not saying that those fighting climate change actually *are* eugenicists — just that they have these traits in common.” It’s like saying Hitler was a vegetarian. (Note of course that it also makes no logical sense).

The irony is that there have been those on the fringe of environmental movement who have endorsed extreme measures. But that’s the point — they are extreme. It’s like saying that Republicans hate science because a few extreme figures, like the chair of the House Science Committee, want to politicize science. Or that the Republican Party stands for selfishness and the belief that most people are worthless parasites because an extreme figure, like the House Budget Chair and

2012 Vice-Presidential candidate, made his interns read Ayn Rand and declared her to be his inspiration for entering politics.

In any event, once upon a time Niall Ferguson had legitimate pretensions to being a serious intellectual. He is now a punch line, and deservedly so.