

The Brexit vote elevated Theresa May to the Prime Minister's office. One of her first steps has been an attack on environmental protection.

In what the Guardian called the "most radical shakeup in the shape of Whitehall for years." She abolished the Department for Energy and Climate Change and moved its functions into the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Did you notice that the word "climate" disappeared along the way?

That's just as well, because May also appointed Andrea Leadsom as the new secretary for environment, food and rural affairs. Most Americans, if they've heard of Leadsom at all, know only that she said she'd be a better leader than May because she had children and May didn't. It turns out that she doesn't grow much more appealing on closer acquaintance. According to the Guardian, "[a]fter her appointment as a minister at the department of energy in 2015 it emerged that she had asked officials whether climate change really existed." The Guardian also reports that Leadsom "generally voted against key measures to stop climate change, including against setting a target on reducing carbon emissions in both 2012 and 2016." She is, however, in favor of selling off the national forests and of fox-hunting (though not, so far as I know, of bear-baiting and cockfighting.) Perhaps she has favored environmental protection now and then, but none of the news stories I've seen mention any examples.

Speaking of cabinet appointments, May has also appointed Boris Johnson as Foreign Minister. Johnson seems mostly noted for his complete lack of diplomacy. (My theory is that she expects the negotiations with Europe to fail and wants to ensure that the blame falls on the leaders of Brexit, not on her.) Johnson is a climate skeptic, so don't expect Britain to be too helpful in future climate negotiations.

All-in-all, this is a pretty grim picture. May had a reputation as a cautious pragmatist, but she seems to be morphing into Donald Trump.