

Polly Toynbee, hitting the nail on the head

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Polly Toynbee has written what, for me, has been the most accurate post budget analysis I've yet seen. She [said today](#):

The two "truths" universally acknowledged are that borrowing is wildly out of control and that the only remedy is leeching public services and shrinking the state. With aplomb every expert intones these factoids. They are not facts, they are political choices to be made. It's up to us what we do, not some great steamroller of inevitability.

And as she points out, one of these is not going to happen (having appropriately damned Brown for inaction on the way):

Until this crisis, Labour's state as a proportion of GDP has been smaller than in most of Thatcher's time. She swelled it to slightly higher than the 48.1% peak Labour predicts — and just think how hard she tried to wield the axe.

Ask Nigel Lawson: determined to cut, he found only £500m.

Ask Portillo: his "fundamental spending review" found virtually nothing.

But choosing your favourite cuts is the new game in town: [Simon Jenkins](#) yesterday picked the Olympics, ID cards, Trident and Titan prisons. We can all pick bad wastages.

But one-offs spent over years yield relatively little. The "efficiency savings", "cutting quangos" and a handful of "over-paid civil servants" Cameron proposed on the Today programme yesterday are the last refuge of politicians afraid to tell the truth.

Precisely.

For all the nonsense of the Right no one has found the savings to be made because it means sick people not treated, pensioners suffering extreme poverty, and the unemployed (the vast majority involuntarily unemployed — let's be clear) on less than £60.50 a week.

It's not going to happen.

Let's face the reality. What failed was neo-liberalism, the Washington consensus, the rule of finance, the idea that we can grow without end. That is what is dead. Gordon Brown says it is dead but does not evidence it. Cameron wants to breathe life back into it at enormous cost to realm people.

Both will fail.

The model does not work. What we will do is transition to a new one. The only hope is that it is relatively painless. And not much blood will flow.