

Thoughts for the day - 1 - The Queen says there is a r...

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[George Monbiot, in the Guardian today:](#)

It could have been worse: at least the police didn't try to kettle half a million people. But as [footage obtained by the Guardian](#) from the great march on Saturday shows, the glorious tradition of impartial policing and respect for peaceful protest remain undimmed. The film shows senior police officers assuring members of UK Uncut who had peacefully occupied Fortnum & Mason that they would not be confused with the rioters outside, and would be allowed to go home if they left the store. They did so, and were penned, handcuffed, thrown into vans, dumped in police cells and, in some cases, left there for 24 hours.

Isn't all that supposed to have stopped? Haven't we entered a new era of freedom in which the government, as it has long promised, now defends ["the hard-won liberties that we in Britain hold so dear"](#)? No.

In May 2010, after becoming deputy prime minister, Nick Clegg pledged that the government would "repeal all of the intrusive and unnecessary laws that inhibit your freedom" and "remove limits on the rights to peaceful protest." The Queen's speech firmed up the commitment by promising "the restoration of rights to non-violent protest". So how did this grand vision become the limp rag of a bill now before parliament?

Because Clegg lied George. That's why.

UK Uncut were doing what the Queen said they should be able to do. They protested, non-violently. Those being violent outside should have been arrested, of course. Those who caused criminal damage should face the law. But those peacefully inside Fortnums - and the police are on video agreeing they were peaceful - were doing what the Queen said they should be able to do.

Will a jury convict in the face of that?

If I was the CPS I'd be saying drop the charges, now.