

Funding the Future

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Polly Toynbee's [written a strong piece in the Guardian](#) this morning, clearly inspired by her (reasonable) reaction to the royal wedding.

She concluded:

Few yet realise the scale of the conservative revolution in progress. Professors [Peter Taylor-Gooby](#) and [Gerry Stoker](#) have just revealed that by 2013 public spending will be a lower proportion of GDP in Britain than in the US. They write in the Political Quarterly: "A profound shift in our understanding of the role of the state and the nature of our welfare system is taking place without serious debate." Can that really be done without rebellion? That will be the test of what kind of nation we are.

Let's be clear: I don't think Polly is inciting riot. The Oxford dictionary defines rebellion as:

rebellion |riˈɛbəlēn|

noun

*an act of violent or open resistance to an established government or ruler : the authorities put down a rebellion by landless colonials | Simon de Montfort rose in rebellion. See note at **uprising** .*

- the action or process of resisting authority, control, or convention : **an act of teenage rebellion.**

ORIGIN Middle English : from Old French, from Latin **rebellio(n-)**, from **rebellis** (see **rebel**).

And yes, we do need to resist authority right now.

But not for the sake of it. We need to do so because authority has been subverted. The authority we now have is actively seeking to destroy rights, and that is why it should

be opposed. I haven't time to explore this in depth now, **so let me borrow this instead, which seeks to explain the logic based on the work of Isaiah Berlin (and Kant, when you get back to basics):**

Negative liberty is the absence of obstacles, barriers or constraints. One has negative liberty to the extent that actions are available to one in this negative sense. Positive liberty is the possibility of acting – or the fact of acting – in such a way as to take control of one's life and realize one's fundamental purposes. While negative liberty is usually attributed to individual agents, positive liberty is sometimes attributed to collectivities, or to individuals considered primarily as members of given collectivities.

The post war consensus was built on the basis of positive liberties. I am a positive libertarian on that basis, and proud to be so. Neo-liberalism and its vision of libertarianism is negative by this definition.

And what we're seeing is the state - the agency that should enforce positive libertarian rights - being used to reinforce the negative libertarian rights of few.

That's the core of this issue.

That's the core of Blue Labour too by the way - as I see it. The collective is positive.

The imposition of the individual over the collective - and the denial that the collective exists - as Thatcher suggested - is what is threatening our society, destroying trust, undermining democracy, increasing fear and seeking to destroy the well being of the majority in the interests of a minority.

That's what Polly is saying we need to rebel against. And she's right.

And let's not forget - it's a libertarian act to rebel for our collective rights. Positively libertarian. In itself a word the left need to reclaim - with precisely the connotation I put on it.