

# Now Peter Osborne joins in the right wing exodus leftwar...

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Yesterday it was [Jeremy Warner in the Telegraph](#) realising that his right wing thinking had been wrong.

[Today it is Peter Osborne](#). I quote at length because candidly this could have come from the blogs of the [Tax Justice Network](#), [Nick Shaxson](#) or even here:

*"It is not just the feral youth of Tottenham who have forgotten they have duties as well as rights. So have the feral rich of Chelsea and Kensington. A few years ago, my wife and I went to a dinner party in a large house in west London. A security guard prowled along the street outside, and there was much talk of the "north-south divide", which I took literally for a while until I realised that my hosts were facetiously referring to the difference between those who lived north and south of Kensington High Street.*

*Most of the people in this very expensive street were every bit as deracinated and cut off from the rest of Britain as the young, unemployed men and women who have caused such terrible damage over the last few days. For them, the repellent Financial Times magazine How to Spend It is a bible. I'd guess that few of them bother to pay British tax if they can avoid it, and that fewer still feel the sense of obligation to society that only a few decades ago came naturally to the wealthy and better off.*

*Yet we celebrate people who live empty lives like this. A few weeks ago, I noticed an item in a newspaper saying that the business tycoon Sir Richard Branson was thinking of moving his headquarters to Switzerland. This move was represented as a potential blow to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, because it meant less tax revenue.*

*I couldn't help thinking that in a sane and decent world such a move would be a blow to Sir Richard, not the Chancellor. People would note that a prominent and wealthy businessman was avoiding British tax and think less of him. Instead, he has a knighthood and is widely feted. The same is true of the brilliant retailer Sir Philip Green. Sir Philip's businesses could never survive but for Britain's famous social and political stability, our transport system to shift his goods and our schools to educate his workers.*

*Yet Sir Philip, who a few years ago sent an extraordinary £1 billion dividend offshore, seems to have little intention of paying for much of this. Why does nobody get angry or hold him culpable? I know that he employs expensive tax lawyers and that everything he does is legal, but he surely faces ethical and moral questions just as much as does a young thug who breaks into one of Sir Philip's shops and steals from it?*

*Our politicians — standing sanctimoniously on their hind legs in the Commons yesterday — are just as bad. They have shown themselves prepared to ignore common decency and, in some cases, to break the law. David Cameron is happy to have some of the worst offenders in his Cabinet. Take the example of Francis Maude, who is charged with tackling public sector waste — which trade unions say is a euphemism for waging war on low-paid workers. Yet Mr Maude made tens of thousands of pounds by breaching the spirit, though not the law, surrounding MPs' allowances."*

And then consider this (and I've chopped quite a lot that is just as good, but this is important stuff for the change in culture it represents):

*The Prime Minister showed no sign that he understood that something stank about yesterday's Commons debate. He spoke of morality, but only as something which applies to the very poor: "We will restore a stronger sense of morality and responsibility — in every town, in every street and in every estate." He appeared not to grasp that this should apply to the rich and powerful as well.*

*The tragic truth is that Mr Cameron is himself guilty of failing this test. It is scarcely six weeks since he jauntily turned up at the News International summer party, even though the media group was at the time subject to not one but two police investigations.*

*These double standards from Downing Street are symptomatic of widespread double standards at the very top of our society. It should be stressed that most people (including, I know, Telegraph readers) continue to believe in honesty, decency, hard work, and putting back into society at least as much as they take out.*

*But there are those who do not. Certainly, the so-called feral youth seem oblivious to decency and morality. But so are the venal rich and powerful — too many of our bankers, footballers, wealthy businessmen and politicians.*

*Of course, most of them are smart and wealthy enough to make sure that they obey the law. That cannot be said of the sad young men and women, without hope or aspiration, who have caused such mayhem and chaos over the past few days. But the rioters have this defence: they are just following the example set by senior and respected figures in society.*

*Something has gone horribly wrong in Britain. If we are ever to confront the problems which have been exposed in the past week, it is essential to bear in mind that they do not only exist in inner-city housing estates.*

*The culture of greed and impunity we are witnessing on our TV screens stretches right up into corporate boardrooms and the Cabinet. It embraces the police and large parts of our media. It is not just its damaged youth, but Britain itself that needs a moral reformation.*

The Tax Justice Network has been at the forefront of such arguments for a long time.

And yet we still see, only this week, [the tax profession openly excusing abuse](#).

No, nothing excuses rioting. But nothing - and I mean it as much - excuses tax haven activity, tax avoidance and tax evasion either. Nor the abuses of corporate Britain.

We have a long way to go - and we must start at the top.