

Opposition to democracy is not some historical anachron...

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I was [interested in this in an article by Owen Jones this morning in the Guardian](#), promoting his new book, [The Establishment](#)*:

"I have heard much on the subject of the working classes in this house which, I confess, has filled me with feelings of some apprehension," Conservative statesman Lord Salisbury told parliament in 1866, in response to plans to extend the suffrage. Giving working-class people the vote would, he stated, tempt them to pass "laws with respect to taxation and property especially favourable to them, and therefore dangerous to all other classes".

It would be easy to see this as an historical anachronism except for the fact that two widely referenced and well funded UK right wing think tanks still very clearly share Lord Salisbury's views. They are the [Institute of Economic Affairs](#) (so beloved by Margaret Thatcher) and the [Adam Smith Institute](#).

It's easy to assume that democracy is a given in our society. It isn't. There are powerful forces in British politics all too keen to get rid of it. There are clear dividing lines in UK politics: this is one of them.

* *I should declare that unless there were very late changes I think you will find I am referred to in the book, but I haven't got a final copy yet.*