

# This is the day we say farewell to everything that was ...

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I am heading for London this morning to comment on the Autumn Statement for BBC News 24 at 11, the Jeremy Vine show on Radio 2 at 1.30 and LBC at 3. Then I am in Cambridge to give a talk at 6.

I should be excited by that prospect, but I am not. That's because I think that today we will say farewell to all that made the UK a compassionate, decent, fair and civilised society. After George Osborne has had his way I have a deeply uncomfortable feeling that this country will be more brutal, unequal, divided and profoundly individualistic. Once Margaret Thatcher said there was no such thing as society. Today I feel like George Osborne is trying to prove it.

Tax is not going to be the focus of today, I suspect. It should be: if George Osborne wants to pursue the goal of a balanced budget (which has no economic merit, at all) then tackling the tax gap and cutting tax expenditures would be the obvious thing to do and that would deliver increased economic fairness and social justice. But those will not be at the heart of today.

Today is about shrinking the state. Apart from the economic illiteracy of this (at the macro level cutting government spending is the same as cutting GDP if there is spare capacity in the economy, and so the policy Osborne is pursuing makes it harder for him to achieve his goal) there is the massive social injustice that this entails to worry about.

Social inequality will increase as a result of today.

Disabled people will be worse off again.

The young will suffer disproportionately.

The education of many will be harmed.

Our long term prospects will be reduced.

Those in need of care will have less available.

Society will be more vulnerable.

And yes, some will die as a result of today. That has to be said.

Those are all choices. And none of them is necessary. The policy of austerity is a political affectation designed to increase the wealth of a few, to favour large companies and to appease bankers. [It cannot work](#), although I think George Osborne does not realise that although the evidence is obvious. And so the question as to why it has been adopted has to be asked.

And that comes down to greed, a sense of entitlement, a lack of empathy, and a blunt indifference to others.

And that indifference is why this country will be worse off for today. For those with compassion, care and concern for others, however and why ever it is motivated, today is a day for concern and resolve to make sure that as much as possible can be done to preserve the values that underpinned the state we have lived in, for all its weaknesses. The alternative is going to be very much worse.