

First they came for Oxfam

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Oxfam is to at least temporarily lose its access to government funding as a result of a tiny number of its staff committing acts for which they have been sacked or had their employments terminated, after which Oxfam appears to have worked hard to improve its safeguarding systems so that an independent review suggested in 2017 that it had the best in the sector.

Let's put this another way. The Times has won retribution for Oxfam having the temerity to ask why those in poverty still have to suffer in that way.

I reiterate my opinion that the only reason why this has happened is because of politics.

How do I know? Because if failures in such systems were really of significance the government would be applying this standard to all competing for aid contracts, and would only reward those with the best standards. But that is not happening. No such appraisal for the sector as a whole has been announced. It is just Oxfam that has been asked to withdraw.

I utterly deplore what some Oxfam employees have done. Who wouldn't?

But let's be clear: all those who believe in the right of charities to ask why poverty persists need to support the continuing right of all charities to do this.

And let me also be clear. First they have come for Oxfam

Next they will challenge all those who campaign on poverty in the world at large.

Then they will come for the environmentalists.

After which those who ask why the vulnerable get such a rough deal from government will be next in line.

As will be those who seek to protect the most basic of human rights.

So let's not pretend for a moment that this is about what happened in Haiti, appalling as it was. This is instead about power. And the right of some to exercise it without being questioned.

And we have every reason to be worried. A government all too willing to side with the attitude of those at The Times has shown on which side it stands. The rest of us need to worry.