

The hope of what was once called a decent living has de...

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I wrote an article for The Independent yesterday. The title they asked me to write about was '[It's now impossible for the average worker to live decently in Britain](#)'.

The article began with an exploration of data on this issue, which I felt to be important. Then, though, I moved to the politics:

[If the average household once voted Tory](#), it was because they had aspirations for their children. They supported children with talent in sport, music or anything else. They helped those with coaching in subjects they struggled in. And they sent them on school trips, believing these were a key part of "getting on".

All that is now beyond such families. The struggle to survive has tipped the balance for average-income households. Once they saw themselves, or their children, as being on the way to better things. This was the dream Thatcher and her successors sold them.

It was this hope of a secure life that might get better that defined "decent living". Those in the upper two income quintiles already had it. Those in the bottom two were told by the snubs sent in the direction of all those who were either on or faced the risk of being on benefits that this was not a hope they could or should share. But the average household was supposed to have a home, a pension, a Ford, a holiday in the sun and access to advancement for their children within their grasp. This was what defined living decently.

That aspiration is now but a faded memory. Instead, the desperate hope is that all the essential household bills might be paid and Christmas might be afforded, somehow. Lurking in the background is the realisation that none of this might be possible and that inability to pay, insolvency and the insecurity that results from them are all a real possibility.

The hope of a decent living has departed for the average household. Fear is all that remains for those who once had hope. Forty years after politics abandoned the post-war consensus, our economy now fails the majority in this country. The era of living

decently on average pay is over.

And that, I suggest, changes the whole political landscape.