

Funding the Future

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Yesterday was a mighty busy day. Video recording and editing were blown apart when Nicky Campbell asked me to be on Radio Five in the morning, which, [as I have noted elsewhere](#), was well worthwhile doing.

Thomas and I then got to creating videos, [including the one that is out this morning](#), which is a reaction to the discussion during that programme.

However, even since making that video, my thinking has developed a bit more, hence why I am asking the question that is the title of this piece, which is, 'Is this the moment when everything changes?'

What I should make clear is that the answer to the question as to who will benefit from increased defence spending in the UK is the wealthiest people in the country. We do not, after all, already do enough to defend the interests of everybody else, so we might pander to the rich by not taxing them enough. And it is, after all, the assets of, and income streams belonging to, the wealthy that any aggressor of the UK will be interested in. Therefore, it can only be the wealthy who must pay for an increase in defence spending.

More than that, though, it is the excess consumption of the wealthiest that must be sacrificed to provide the necessary personnel and physical resources required for that purpose. Nothing else is possible unless the people of this country are betrayed by those supposedly leading it who would otherwise choose to punish the vulnerable in the name of the defence of the wealthy.

I got the impression that Professor Tony King of Exeter University agreed with this analysis yesterday, but perhaps the most interesting comments made during Nicky Campbell's programme were made by a woman named Emma who made the point, often also made on this blog, which is that as things stand, nothing seems to work in this country. She is, of course, right. Neoliberalism has soured our well-being, and I had the opportunity to say so and to explain when and why that started in ways that I hope were understandable. I also referred to the single transferable party and the hegemony of ideas that they represent, which hegemony denies us the opportunity for the change that the country is crying out for.

Tony King and I concluded as a result that the current threat of aggression might precipitate that moment of change that we know to be necessary. It is now very obvious that what is happening in this country is unsustainable. The current political consensus quite literally cannot last because the means for it to do so do not exist. That is because neoliberalism, the structures of wealth that support it, and the companies that exploit it have no ideas left on how to manage the situation we are in.

Essential questions about the nature of our society, such as what we have government for and what, therefore, we are seeking to defend by incurring additional defence expenditure, will inevitably arise now and will have to be answered, but neoliberals will have no idea how to do so.

In that case, you cannot suggest that defence spending must take place in virtually unlimited fashion if that decision means that funds are not available to protect those who are vulnerable and who need protection within our society. That would not be acceptable to people in this country, I suggest.

Likewise, it will be noticed, most especially but not only by the young, that if such spending means that funds are not available to manage the even more significant challenge to our long-term well-being that climate change represents, then we are not defending anything at all, but would instead be giving in to failure.

The conflicts that will be apparent in these differences of approach will have to be addressed. That is most especially because any politician who cannot come up with appropriate answers will not succeed in future elections. I think it is as simple as that.

There is, of course, an implicit assumption in what I just wrote, which is that there will be future elections. Conflict does always threaten democracy. But it was in an era of conflict that democracy's most glorious moments, which happened in the 25 years after World War II, were nursed into existence. I sincerely hope we see no suspension of democracy, even if only of the somewhat unrepresentative form that we have, but what I also hope is that the discussion we deserve on just what it is that we are defending in terms of ideas, structures of society, people, culture, places, assets, income streams, and most of all, well-being. If we can't do that, what is the purpose of politics?

What troubles me is that I suspect that most of our politicians could not address those issues and do not realise that we need to do so. That thought is, in itself, deeply concerning.

We are going to be living in interesting times.