

Is there any limit to what the poor might fund?

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[Yesterday](#) and [this morning](#), I noted the FT's view that the poorest in our society must suffer an income loss to fund the interest they think is rightfully due to savers during these stressful times for the wealthy.

This morning, The Telegraph notes that Kemi Badeoch thinks the poorest amongst us might do even more to fund this country in its time of need. As [they report](#):

Today, Kemi Badenoch, the Conservative Party leader, will set out how she would raise that £10bn. It's the first time we will hear specifics on how to hit the 3 per cent target of GDP for defence spending by 2030.

It is by slashing the welfare bill, generating £3.1bn by reimposing the two-child benefit cap and saving £1bn by ending VAT exemptions for Motability vehicles, among other policies.

So, now we know. Kemi Badenoch, and no doubt her party, and a great many of its supporters, think that those who must do most to fund this country in its time of need are those who have the least ability to do so.

Children living in poverty must pay.

Those who are utterly dependent upon cars, which are very often adapted to suit their disabilities, must make the sacrifice that this country demands.

And, although we do not know the details yet, I strongly suspect the triple lock will be questioned when it comes to pensions, leaving some of the most vulnerable elderly people in the country even more exposed to economic hardship than they are now.

The logic that underpins this is perverted. I use that word quite deliberately. The proposal being made is sadistic. It is callous. It is intended to create hardship. The gloating, already apparent in the Telegraph's email, hints at the pleasure being derived from making such suggestions.

Let me put this another way. If there is such a thing as evil, and I think there is, then the comments made yesterday by the FT, and those which it appears Kemi Badenoch will make today, represent that in our current politics. We have come to expect both vileness and viciousness from Reform and Restore, but these sentiments come from a political party that once suggested itself as the representative of 'One Nation', and from a newspaper that would like to think itself a pillar of the establishment.

I can safely conclude one thing, and that is that the establishment is rotten.

In 1940, John Maynard Keynes, in his book *How to Pay for the War*, answered that question in a short book that explained his thinking. His logic went on to underpin the economic policy of the UK when we were fighting fascism, rather than promoting it.

His argument was unambiguous. He made clear that if sacrifice was to be made, it had to be by the wealthy, and it had to be seen to be so, so that everyone would understand the demands that might also be made of them if we were to beat an enemy.

I am aware that we now live in a different era. The threat from fascism is no longer external. It is here, now, amongst us. The defence we need against it must be built on what might, in 1940, have been called the home front. That is the arena to which defence spending should now be most directed.

But, that said, the relevance of Keynes remains. His argument was that if more resources were to be required for defence, those who could give up their excess consumption, and who could afford to do so out of the high levels of income that they enjoyed, were the wealthy. He argued that others should not.

Nothing has changed. If we need defence, it is because the wealthy's well-being is most at risk. After all, we have a country totally oriented to preserving the wealth of those who already have it. And yet the demand being made is that those with least must make required sacrifices to fund defence at a level for which no one can provide justification, against an enemy whose identity is still, in my opinion, unknown, since I no more expect to see Russian troops marching across Europe now than I did at the height of the Red Scare paranoia of the Cold War, which I witnessed when I was growing up.

There is, however, a difference between the 1960s and 1970s and now. Back then, we cared. Now it seems the greatest desire of our political leaders is to abuse those most in need.

Two obvious questions follow. The first is, how far have we sunk? The second is, how much further will we fall? I can answer the first: we are a very long way down. The answer to the second is what frightens me.