

A benign democracy . . .

THE MISERABLE AND DANGEROUS CLASSES have risen in rebellion. Acting without apparent cause, without specific grievance - the shooting to death of Mark Duggan on Thursday, long forgotten - great mobs of unemployable, poorly educated youth, have run amok. Led by local networks of criminals they have burned hundreds of working class people out of their homes and out of their jobs. "It is sheer criminality," says Teresa May, our remarkably astute Home Secretary. "It will not be tolerated" bluster politicians and police officials alike. Meanwhile Turkish shopkeepers in North London are hurriedly forming vigilante groups to defend their homes and livelihoods. Frightened and outraged people are calling for "no-nonsense" repression - water cannon, tear gas, rubber bullets, for troops on the streets - only to be greeted with ministers who insist that traditional "policing by consent" must prevail.

The *Daily Telegraph* this morning, with some ironic intent, referred to Britain as "a benign democracy" - I have no doubt that the posh wallahs running the country actually believe this. They certainly seem blithely unaware that there is no democracy for the ignorant, forgotten, jobless kids of the inner cities and 'dump estates' which fester around most of our cities. The ruling class and their professional mouthpieces in the media seem to be stunningly ignorant of the fact that the rioting kids who apparently are "destroying their own communities", who are apparently, "wrecking society", are not aware of having a "community" or indeed of living in "society". Rather they think that they live in a free-for-all-jungle in which the rich and powerful take everything, a society in which only lottery wins, celebrity, violence, and criminality pay.

The young rioters have seen too, exactly how the political protests of students were treated by the

authorities. They have witnessed the arrogance of those who tripled student fees - the ignorance of those who actually abolished the Education Maintenance Allowance without understanding that tens of thousands of youngsters simply cannot attend colleges of further education without the bus fares and lunch money provided by the EMA. They have seen how fair tax and anti-cuts protesters are treated by the police, and how implacably complacent and conceited mayors and ministers, full of bonhomie and good intentions, treat anyone who disagrees with the millionaires' agenda for government. Is it any wonder that youngsters abandoned by society have decided to follow the lead of street level gangsters and criminals by simply hitting out at all and sundry and looting what they want?

When one surveys the bribery and corruption at the heart of the media and the police, an economic system in which central bankers and finance ministers, appear to have been asleep on duty over the last twenty years, while Members of Parliament have been fraudulently claiming for flat screen TVs and tree surgery on their country estates, it does seem that the ignorant unemployable kids might not be so stupid after all. Every day they see the radical disconnect between effort and reward, and they cannot for the life of them work out why they shouldn't be able to live in what appears to them to be the same idle irresponsible luxury as those who lord it over them. No doubt lavishly bonus'd bankers, well-heeled consultants, hard pressed business people, and professionals of all kinds, will point to their own considerable skills and industry to justify their six and seven figure incomes - but the reality of professional expertise, long years of education and training, years of deferred gratification, is simply not grasped by the socially excluded. This is precisely because they are actually *excluded* - they do not understand what it means to be a responsible parent or a productive member of society.

Hence the nihilistic violence and looting. People who burn down probation offices, attack police stations, trash hair dressing salons, baby clothes outlets, betting shops,

cafes, and restaurants, those who burn down furniture stores and party shops, are *not* simply intent on looting. They are trashing a society that trashes them. They simply do not care about the consequences or count the cost. Consequently, they must, without hesitation, be stopped as soon as possible. This will no doubt involve considerable violence and repression, but, let's be clear, repression without a commitment to social justice and measures to enhance social solidarity will not work.

As share prices tumble, economic stagnation is a certainty, and recession is a distinct possibility. Therefore, we can no longer afford to put up with the myopic millionaires running the country. We need to install a robust progressive taxation system. We need to build houses, improve our road and transport systems, rapidly speed up our creaking broadband infrastructure, restart the school building programme, found a state-financed manufacturers' bank, capable of advancing investment capital to small and medium enterprises. We need to pay down our debts by expanding our economy. Never mind hiring community workers and running youth clubs, let's open training centres, teach poor kids to drive - to get licences, get jobs, and pay road tax! We need a grand plan to teach the rioters what social solidarity means and we need to recognise that we simply cannot do that with George Osborne, Nick Clegg, or David Cameron, at the wheel - if we don't get rid of these deluded liars and fools they'll take us all over the edge of the cliff.