

The Latest News

The Real Cost Of Austerity



GNEWS NEWS POLITICS

By Alexander Baron

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What is the point of fining someone for a criminal offence? The theory is that punishment constitutes deterrence, rehabilitation and retribution. Real crimes – not victimless or imaginary ones – are a blight on society, and need to be minimised. A theft may be trivial, but if there is no deterrence, then trivial thefts will multiply. There is a school of thought that says if corruption is not nipped in the bud, it will spread.

With any punishment though, there should be a sense of proportionality. For some people, the real punishment is not a fine imposed by a magistrate, but something far more severe. Recently, a woman who stole a pack of Mars Bars was fined over £300; if a solicitor or an accountant had been so convicted, the fine would have been the least of his problems, because he would have lost his livelihood. That is probably the major reason professional people are more honest than the rest of us in a purely fiscal sense.

For Louisa Sewell though, the fine was grossly disproportionate, because she was not only unemployed but had no income after her benefit was sanctioned. In 1905, a youth who stole a loaf of bread was given a **fourteen day sentence**. Today, in the absence of special circumstances, most people would consider such a sentence to be excessive, but for Miss Sewell it would have been a blessing in disguise. She would have been properly fed for the next week or so, and hopefully by that time her benefit could have been restored.

Now, she faces even more hardship, or she would have but for a magnificent gent from north of the border who started a **crowdfunding campaign for her**. Him and all those other magnificent people who contributed to it.

Sarah's story



I didn't complete the CV I agreed to do on my action plan

"I didn't think a CV would help me but my work coach told me that all employers need one. I didn't have a good reason for not doing it and I was told I'd lose some of my payment. I decided to complete the CV and told my work coach.

I got a letter to say my benefit would go down for two weeks. I was told it was longer than a week because I missed a meeting with my work coach back in March.

My benefit is back to normal now and I'm really pleased with how my CV looks. It's going to help me when I'm ready to go back to work."

This is the real face of austerity, not the ludicrous fake one that appeared on **an official leaflet** recently (pictured above), and which had to be withdrawn. Forcing people off benefits will not save money, it will cost more financially, and a lot more in human terms. Think about it, what might another hungry young woman have done rather than steal? Something far more degrading and a crime against herself. What might a man do under similar circumstances? Commit a far more serious crime, perhaps a violent one. Then there are all the other hidden costs of austerity. How about shutting down a rural fire station that hasn't answered an emergency call for the past two years? Then the following week, a country hotel is burned to the ground with enormous loss of life. This is known as **Sevareid's law**, think before you tackle a problem lest you make it worse, or create other problems you might not be able to fix.

If the Cameron Government is so intent on saving money, there are many things it could do. For one thing it could kick out all bogus asylum seekers – which is most of them – and take Draconian measures to **curb the influx** from Calais.

It could stop funding so-called charities like the recently folded **Kids Company**.

It could put an end to the **historical child abuse witch-hunt** which is a drain on police resources, and use the police to fight real crime, not the victimless crimes of drug taking or prostitution.

It could even scrap our nuclear deterrent, so-called, because just in case you hadn't noticed, the Sun set on the British Empire decades ago, and the real threat now comes not from some evil

empire but from terrorism, sickos who fly planes into buildings or detonate bombs in public places.

There are many other things the Government could do, but don't bank it doing anything except continually grind down the people at the bottom of the pyramid, the ones who are not the real cause of society's problems but a symptom of them.

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