

## **ROY HATTERSLEY INTERVIEW**

**In this interview, Roy Hattersley talks about socialism in general, Clement Attlee's role in bringing social democracy to Britain, and Tony Blair's transformation of the Labor Party.**

**Let's start with Clement Attlee. Who was he and what did he accomplish?**

Clement Attlee was the leader of the Labor Party for nearly twenty years and Prime Minister from 1945 to 1951, and we would argue that during those six years, he and his government changed the world. Not only did they bring the health service, free Medicare to Britain, universal free Medicare, and not only did they create the system of social security, the modern system on employment benefit, benefits to the really poor old age pensions, but they began the process of decolonization. It was the Attlee government that emancipated India. India, Pakistan, Ceylon, who made free nations under Attlee, born many months afterwards, and that process multiplied, not only British colonies, but French colonies, Dutch colonies. So Attlee was only seven of the Prime Ministers of British history who changed Britain and changed the world.

**Did the social and economic climate of post-war Britain pave the way for social democracy?**

I think it was a feeling in Britain in 1945, which has been summed up in a phrase "never again." Between the wars there had been immense poverty in this country. There had been huge unemployment. The private enterprise system failed or seemed to have failed and social democracy was offering a real alternative, and things seemed obviously right for the Labor Party. For forty years, the British coalmines had warranted a loss. They'd been subsidized by the taxpayers. They'd done very little about safety. It just seemed natural and obvious and commonsensical that they should be taken to public ownership and run better. So social democracy seemed the commonsense way of ending a system which people deeply resented after the war.

**How did Labor win the election?**

Well, there are two factors that helped the election of labor government. One was that during the war, the idea of public enterprise, the government involving itself in the market had been accepted. And Labor Party people said, is [that] a better way to make Spitfires, Hurricanes, fighter airplanes is for the government to organize it. It wasn't the best way to make motorcars and trucks for the government to organize it. Second, the Labor Party has always suffered from the allegation its leaders don't know how to run the country. Well, its leaders had been running the country in the wartime coalition. Attlee had been Deputy Prime Minister and his deputy became Foreign Secretary to Minister of Labor. The Labor Party was established and well known. Those two things made a big difference.

**What about Winston Churchill?**

Everybody expected Winston Churchill to win in 1945. He was the hero of the war. He was certainly the most popular man in Britain and probably the most popular man in the world. And he, well they took it for granted, that his reputation of winning the war [would] see him through.

Mister Attlee himself didn't expect to win the election, but in fact, people preferred the policies of the Labor Party to the personality of Winston Churchill. Attlee went to Buckingham Palace to receive the Queen's commission to form a government. That's the official, technical, formal way, with great surprise. Mrs. Attlee told me when I did a television program about Attlee's centenary, that she was shopping on the afternoon of the election, and a shop assistant came and said that there was this special newspaper edition out on the street saying "Labor Wins the Election," and Mrs. Attlee was surprised that he'd won the election and drove her husband to Buckingham Palace to receive the Queen's commission.

**Was there a defining moment for Labor during the campaign that brought the electorate firmly into its camp?**

The important thing in the '45 election was not broadcast speeches but the party political broadcasts we have in this country. We're about to abandon it and a good thing too, but we had official broadcasts by each of the contending parties. Winston Churchill may think it's an extremely stupid broadcast comparing the Labor Party with a Gestapo, suggesting that if the Labor Party was elected, it would be totalitarianism in Great Britain. Well, this was deeply resented by thousands of soldiers who fought labor. They'd been fighting the Gestapo for five years and weren't about to be told that their instincts were parallel to those of the Gestapo, and Mister Attlee brushed him aside, didn't take him on head on, but simply said this is rather foolish way to behave. That very much appealed to the British electorate in enough sense that the broadcast, the Gestapo broadcast, was the changing moment of the '45 election.

**Was Attlee as charismatic a leader as Churchill?**

I don't think Attlee personally was more appealing to the British voters. I think the British voters liked the bulldog image of Winston Churchill. They'd hated him before the war I might say. Winston Churchill was a profoundly unpopular politician until the war, but he did win the war or at least he articulated the spirit that won the war even though he said that he wasn't the lion. He was the lion's roar, and people liked that. So any British family, including the most devoted labor family, if they'd been asked whom they wanted around for supper, they would have chosen Winston Churchill rather than Clement Attlee any day. But Winston Churchill seemed to stand for the old ways, for unemployment, for poverty, for no medical care, for an inadequate system of education. Attlee was a very much more withdrawn figure, very quietly spoken little man with very little personal charisma, but what he stood for was what appealed to the British people.

**Was Attlee a socialist?**

Attlee stood for in the phrase, fair shares for all, which was interpreted by the Labor Party by socialists which Attlee was not, and by social democrats which Attlee was, as a system of positive redistribution through higher taxes, through which the nation paid for Medicare, pensions, unemployment benefits, rebuilding the schools, get education at which was passed during the war but implemented by the labor government. He believed in redistribution, and in a sense he believed in equality, which is a keystone of all socialist thinking.

**How did the new Labor government fare after the election?**

The one strength of the Attlee government is the things they did after the election were the things they proposed to do before the election. I don't know what happened, but they did. They created a national health service, free medical care for everybody. They instituted a system of pension, which made old age dignified, if not prosperous. They introduced a system of unemployment benefit by which the unemployed could automatically get a living allowance while they were out of work. They introduced a massive program of house building for a country, which was short of houses, partly historically, partly because of those which had been destroyed during the war. They took into public ownership coal, rail, steel, road haulage, gas and electricity. They gave freedom to the colonial countries of India, Pakistan, Ceylon, as it then was, Sri Lanka it is now, and Burma. I mean they had a pretty busy six years. I don't think any government's ever been as busy.

**How did the voters feel about nationalizing major industries?**

There was immense support for nationalization at that time. So much so, the Tory Party didn't vote against it in the House of Commons. Uh, the Tory Party only voted against one measure of public ownership in the House of Commons and that was the nationalization of steel. Uh, they accepted the nationalization of the Bank of England, for instance, which has been denationalized by a new labor government. But the feeling at the time when the state could do the job was very, very strong. That mood passed over the next twenty-five years. But in 1945 people believed the government and its agents should have won the war so why shouldn't the government and its agents win the peace?

**How did the public react when nationalization happened?**

[There was] immense rejoicing at the news of public ownership. I was a little boy living, oh, ten or fifteen miles away from a coalmine, and my parents and I, a labor family peddled to the coal mine gate to see the notice that had been put up, and it said outside, "This Coal Mine is Managed on Behalf of the People by the British [Order]" and we rejoiced just to see the notice outside.

**How did Attlee's government compare to Margaret Thatcher's?**

I think the Attlee government is one of the two governments of Britain in the Twentieth Century that changed the world. I think the Attlee government was one of the two governments of the Twentieth Century that totally changed Great

Britain. Mrs. Thatcher was the second in influencing Britain in favor of private enterprise, the market, the absence of state intervention, lower taxes, less public expenditure. The Attlee government changed Britain quite the other way. It made Britain for six years a country that really believes in social democracy, and for six years was moving towards a Socialist or a Social democracy, and for six years was moving towards a Socialist or Social Democratic form of organization. Britain never became a Social Democratic country because Attlee only had six years to change it, but was certainly moving in that direction.

**According to Attlee what promises did socialism have in store for the ordinary man?**

I believe absolutely that Attlee who was a moderate Socialist in the terms of the argument believed that you changed society, that is, the nature of men and women by changing their environment. He believed that if people lived in slum houses, if they were sick and couldn't have proper medical care, they grew up to be different people from those who lived in prosperity. That, I might say, seems to me to be self-evident. I believe that now. And it's not simply the Labor Party and Socialists who believe that. John Wesley says to build a new world we need new men if we [want to] build the new world. A canon of socialism is you have to change the physical environment if you want to improve human nature and that Attlee certainly believed.

**Were there any bumps along the way for Labor after it took over?**

I was a little boy. I was, I think, twelve or thirteen during the Big Freeze, but I can remember how long it lasted. It was there for week in and week out and we all put our leather boots on and waded about. We never experienced the power cuts and the food shortages and all the things that went with it, but there were parts of the country that because the freeze was so bad and so prolonged where coal went out in the power stations so there was no gas and electricity, where transport broke down, and of course, the Attlee government was blamed for that. Well, the Attlee government wasn't responsible for it, but the Attlee government evidentially was blamed for it.

**Was there ever any internal dissention within the Labor party leadership?**

The split of the Labor Party was basically about the armaments and about where government should concentrate most of its resources. I sat in Hal Wilson's cabinet, and Hal Wilson would talk constantly about the split of 1950 saying that it wasn't a matter of debts, spending the money on rearmament; it was a matter of how the economy was run. But at the time, it was represented as an iron button. Even the Minister was introducing a health service and it was a lean to the left of the Labor Party saying he didn't want to spend money on rearmament which could better be spent on other things, and the other things which he had particularly in mind were medical prescriptions. Until that time, you went to a doctor. Your doctor gave you a prescription for medication. You took it to the chemist and you got it free. The Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed there should be a charge for each prescription, and that, perhaps to some people

[it was a] fundamental issue and perhaps to others a minor issue, became the breaking point which essentially destroyed the labor government. Some resigned. Hal Wilson, who later became Prime Minister, resigned. Two other ministers resigned with him, and the labor government never really recovered from that.

### **What role did trade unions play in the Labor Party?**

The unions in 1945 to 1951 were politically very different from what the unions later became. The unions in this country in the late '40s were nothing remotely democratic. They did what the union bosses said, and the Labor Party apart from one spate of trouble was the Scottish Miners and another brief period of trouble with dockworkers in London, had no trouble with the trade unions at all. At our party conference, our annual convention, there's normally great arguments, or used to be great arguments, about whether the union would support leadership or defeat leadership. In Attlee's day, the union leaders used to come and see him in his hotel room and he'd tell them which way to vote and everything was totally happy. The union supported the '45 to '51 government in a way they've never supported a government since.

### **Why do you think Labor ultimately lost power?**

I think [there is] a very real chance the labor government in '51 ran out of ideas. A philosopher of labor, also a labor minister said that we lost our way not because we didn't possess maps of the countryside, but we thought maps weren't necessary to experienced travelers, and what he meant by that was that the Labor Party was too pragmatic. He thought he could make up its policy as it went along. In '45 it was easy. Clearly, you needed a health service. '45 was easy. Clearly, you needed decent pensions. After those basic things had been done, we needed some philosophical guidance. The great thing about the Labor Party is it's always shied away from philosophical guidance. It's never wanted any theories. It's never wanted any ideology. It just wanted to do it and doing it wasn't enough in '51. It needed some ideas for which to inspire the people.

Two things happened over the next decade. The first is material in that the terms of trade turned very much in our favor. The austerity of the wartime Britain and trying to put Britain back on its feet after the ravages, economic ravages of the war made it look as if the Labor Party couldn't run the economy. We were able to take advantage of economic expansion until we get to 1958 and Mister Macmillan says, you've never had it so good and people are saying, what the conservatives do is put money in our pockets. So we lost the popularity because the economy would move in the direction of the Tory Party. We also, in part, damaged ourselves not as badly as we did in the '80s, but we were fighting amongst ourselves in the '50s. And one of the qualities, one of the conditions, one of the characteristics [is that] Socialist, Social Democratic Parties, they fight amongst themselves.

### **Did voters come to look at the Labor party as old-fashioned?**

If the country had seen the labor party as old fashioned, I don't believe we would have won back power thirteen, fourteen years later in 1964 because the Labor Party of sixty-four wasn't fundamentally different from the Labor Party of fifty-one. It was more efficient in terms of political organization. It had come to terms with things like NATO and German Rearmament, but economically it had the same prescription for Britain in '64 as it did for '51, and it seemed very relevant in '64 and then in '66, we had the second largest election victory in our history.

**What is the relationship between the Soviet Union and socialism?**

I don't think the Soviet Union has very much to do with socialism. Socialism comes in a lot of different shapes and sizes. It's like religion. You can define it in whichever way you want, and the traditional Western European definition of socialism is it's an enabling philosophy. Say adopting freedom and liberty, making people free, and whatever else the Soviet Union did, it didn't make people free. The Soviet Union chose to call itself a union of Socialist Republics and did the idea of socialism immense harm when anti-social democrat propagandas could say, you know, today it's what Attlee and Wilson stands for or tomorrow it'll be what Stalin and Khrushchev stand for. But I don't think the two things were ever related, and I don't think association with the Soviet Union did Britain very much damage at all, because it was always seen that British Labor Ministers were antagonistic towards what the Soviet Union was doing as were Republican or Democratic Presidents of the United States. I mean we were part of NATO. We were holding the line against the Soviet Union. We participated in the Berlin Blockade or breaking the blockade as Americans did. We had our troops on the ground out there in the demarcation line and we had our own nuclear weapon. We were anti-Soviet essentially.

**Does it matter whether we say “socialist” or “social democrat” or what have you?**

I don't think you change the name. I happily call myself a social democrat or a socialist whatever it comes. I'm never in favor of not changing the names. But [when] you get worried about names and frightened of them, you get frightened of the ideas they carry, and then you begin to abandon the idea because you're frightened of the entire concept. I think if we had a moderate socialist government in this country, the Soviet government they have in Sweden which calls itself social democratic, but it is socialist by the sound of it, that government would win an election in a way that John Smith, another party leader who died two years before the '97 year election, he would have won the general election substantially on an essentially Socialist/Socialist Democrat ticket.

**Has the fall of the Soviet Union changed the way people think about European socialism?**

I don't the fall of the Soviet Union had very much effect on Western European Socialists or Social Democrats at all. We rejoiced in it, of course. We rejoiced in it. I And people who were the main protagonists of détente in the

Soviet Union like Willie Brown, the Soviet Democrat, believed that détente would open up the Soviet Union and would make it a free country again. So we rejoiced that the Soviet Union did collapse in the way it did and what happened about how some of the constituent states have developed. But the idea that the empire of the Soviet Union should end, of course, is nothing but pleasure. But I don't think we ever thought it made any difference to our voting potential here in Western Europe.

### **What's the difference between the Labor Party of Clement Attlee and that of Tony Blair?**

Well, the difference between the Labor Party of Tony Blair and the Labor Party under Attlee is the Attlee Labor Party was social democratic and Tony Blair's isn't. It is you want to hang labels around politicians. Tony Blair is essentially what in continental Europe would be a Christian Democrat and which is a belief that society needs to be more compassionate, fairer; that he needs to look after the poor better than he does now, but no wish to change the nature of society. Essentially social democrats want a new society. Tony Blair doesn't.

### **Is Blair's Labor Party more attuned to "free markets" than Attlee's labor?**

The Labor Party in 1945 believed in a mixture between private and public enterprise but believed that there was a strong argument for public enterprise in certain sectors of the economy. Tony Blair believes that the market, that private enterprise, solves nearly all the economy's problems and not only the economy's problems but a number of moral problems about how they should distribute incomes, how [they] should distribute earnings, what you do with savings. An article in a socialist magazine quite recently talking about the return of Milton Freedman and what it meant by that was not an economist working something out in Cambridge but the Labor Party had now freed the knight in its belief that the market was the solution to most of our problems of distribution, problems of ethics and low problem economics. Well, Attlee would have been astounded by that. Frankly, would have laughed at that, as I think most social democrats would.

### **How did Tony Blair rise to power?**

Tony Blair was elected First Labor Party Leader and Second Prime Minister for a variety of reasons. Firstly, for a number of personal qualities. We talk about our government being increasingly presidential. The process of forming a government become increasingly presidential, and the man, his character, his awful world charisma, how he appears on television, all that is convincing. Well, Tony Blair, believe me, would be a perfect candidate for presidency of the United States of America. He has those personal qualities and that was important. Secondly, the Labor Party longed to win. We'd been out of office for eighteen years. We hated very much of what Mrs. Thatcher had done during her twelve years in power, and what we wanted more than anything else was to be back in government, and it seemed that Tony Blair would do that by making what amounted to a clean start.

The other element, which endeared him to the Labor Party, but I think not to the country, is many Labor Party people did not realize how much of social democracy he intended to abandon. I was personally astonished. Tony Blair worked for me for four years. I helped as best I could in his campaign to believe the Labor Party because he called himself something, “Christian Socialist,” and Christian Socialism means something very precise and it’s more or less what I believe in. And when I discovered that Tony Blair didn’t believe in it, it came [as] something of a shock to me.

**What is “Clause Four” and what was its significance to the Labor Party?**

Removing Clause Four from the Labor Party Constitution was significant because it demonstrated that we were not the old party of wholesale public ownership. I’d always wanted to replace Clause Four with something more meaningful. Clause Four never meant anything and Clause Four was a jumble of words, which were interpreted whatever way you wanted. The man who drafted the Labor Party Constitution wrote a piece for the *Observer* newspaper one week saying that mostly it was mumbo jumbo and it really didn’t matter.

But Clause Four was taken completely by our enemies as proof that we wanted to arrive at your television company and take it over and own it by the state and run it by the state, and we wanted to nationalize every grocery store, the shop on the street corner, that we wanted to take every little bit of prosperity out of the hands of private owners and run it by the state. And getting rid of Clause Four became one of those issues, which is only an issue because you make it so. Clause Four itself meant nothing, but I wanted to get rid of it and replace it by something that set out the proper basic principles of social democracy. In fact, we got rid of one jumble of words and replaced it by another jumble of words, but by doing the job we proved that something had changed.

**Was “Clause Four” more symbol than substance?**

Well, Clause Four became, I think the phrase is an “aura flame.” It became a flame, which denoted who and what you were. Well, the greatest things about the old Labor Party, the Labor Party of 1979 and 1980 let’s say, is you had a number of things which you had to do to proclaim you are on the left wing of the Labor Party. What you had to do most to proclaim you’re on the left wing of the Labor Party was to say you were on the left wing of the Labor Party. It didn’t matter really whether you worked it out or thought about it or understood it, and one of the things that made you a left-winger, this glorious condition of political animal, is that you believed in Clause Four. And if you went to the local Labor Party meeting here in the Westminster constituency of London in a little room around the corner, I bet in 1980, there’d be twenty people, eighteen of them who said they passionately believed in Clause Four and not one of them could quote it to you. Well, believing in Clause Four was like a badge and as long as you said it, you were okay.

**How does socialism live on in the new Labor Party?**

The problem is they used to move from socialism to social-ism. I don't think you even dare say that now. He certainly talked about being on the center left a little. Probably he said it. The Prime Minister used to talk about social-isms instead of socialism. I don't think he even dares to put in the hyphen now. He talks about the Labor Party being only center-left of the political spectrum. Not the left center, but the center-left would certainly come first, and I think that probably widened obvious and proper. When you are interviewing him, he would not claim to be a Socialist.

When you were interviewing him, he would say that a new party was created when he became leader. Year one in our history was the year that Tony Blair became leader of the Labor Party and everything starts from then. I'm not sure that he thought, at the time, of how great the revolution would be that he led. I think he wanted a number of substantial changes to policy, but I think in a sense, they've grown as he's grown into the job. The more he sees of private enterprise, the more he likes it. The more he sees of the Atlantic Alliance, the more he likes it. The more he sees of what I would define as the best of socialism which is the cooperative idea of working together, the more he suspects that that doesn't produce the sort of society he wants to see.

### **Where is the Labor Party taking Britain today?**

I think the greatest policy shift to all is the introduction of private investment and private capital into the public services. We've almost given up hospital building by the government, and hospital building is now done by private companies. It started off originally as hospital building that was just done to postpone the payment, the virtual mortgage on the hospital. We paid off the private company over like twenty years. Then it was the good idea for the private companies to run the hospitals as well.

All these things gradually developed into what is essentially a private enterprise party, and it's a party, which in many ways has neglected sort of the traditional areas. Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, who I think remains a social democrat, has done wonderfully helpful things for the working poor and we brought in a national minimum wage. This country didn't have a national minimum wage until five years ago. We have guaranteed income for the working poor. We've scandalously neglected the poor while those through health or just the unavailability of a job aren't working, and those aren't the social things the traditional Labor Party would have ever contemplated doing.

### **Is Labor now the party of business?**

Blair likes business and feels more at home with business than he feels at home with the trade unions. And therefore, whenever there's been a decision to be made, [there's friction] as to whether it should be business that wins or the trade unions that win, arguments about employment policy or arguments about the free labor market, arguments about security of employment. All these things are coming out of Europe. The European worker's charter which other countries accepted in full. Britain's only accepted them in part because it didn't want to accept policies which were offensive to the Confederation of British Industry. So

there are very many things which are in the Maastricht Agreement workers' section [that] the Blair government hasn't implemented. Though other governments in Europe, some of them so-called right wing governments, have.

### **Has the Labor Party of today redefined socialism?**

The Prime Minister would say that new labor was a redefinition of socialism. I believe it's a rejection of socialism. I believe that many things in the Labor Party's policy needed to change to meet the demands of the modern world, but I thought we ought to hold tight to our basic principles and see how those basic principles could be applied in the modern world. The Prime Minister has abandoned the basic principles. The Prime Minister is overtly is opposed to a more equal society. He wants a meritocracy rather than an equal society which is a contradiction of socialism.

He demonstrated this terrifyingly during the last year election campaign on television when the interviewer presented him with figures that showed that the gap between the poorest and the richest has widened during the four years of labor government, and he was asked if he was concerned about this, and he wouldn't say that he wasn't even concerned about it. He said that what was important was making sure the economy expanded in general. That happens to be the trickle down effect. He had more sense then to use that distributive phrase, but he couldn't bring himself to say that he was worried about increasing divergence between the rich and poor. Now any Labor Party leader, any Labor Party member who just didn't instinctively express his horror -- while the poorer have got poorer, while the rich are getting richer -- can't make any claim to be a social democrat.

### **What's the future of the British Labor Party?**

I think the Labor Party will tiptoe back towards a genuine social democratic position. I think it'll take some time. I think it'll happen after Mister Blair goes. And just in case your program returns to these shores, I'm not calling the Prime Minister to resign today. If he has any sense, he'll fight the next general election, but he will go in time, and when he goes, I think a new leader will be more of the traditional labor sort. And over the next 20 [to] 25 years, we'll reassert ourselves in the position of the German Social Democrat, the Swedish Social Democrats.

One interesting reason which people don't understand or accept is all these changes are only applying to England. We've got double government now in Scotland and in Wales. The changes in school organization, which many of us think were wrong, haven't applied in Wales and Scotland. The abandonment of grants to undergraduates going to universities hasn't applied in Scotland or Wales. The introduction of private enterprise into nationalized industries and school and hospital-building programs hasn't applied in Scotland or Wales. Social democracy is alive and living in Scotland and Wales. It's just in England that the change has happened.

### **Where should you draw the line between the public sector and private sector in a social democracy?**

Some of us have always known this had to be a substantial. I suppose a majority of the economy operated on free-market lines or free enterprise. I think that's necessary for freedom as well as for competitive efficiency. But there has to be a section of the economy, which operates as a public institution not guided by the principles of marginal productivity if you're going to have anything like a welfare state.

Now the argument within socialism ought to be read a boundary line. Only the most idiotic extreme socialist ever wanted to see a complete publicly owned economy or a publicly regulated economy for that matter. I suppose in a sense, three decisions have to be taken: one is the size of the unregulated market, because some has to be unregulated. The second is the size of the regulated market. And the third is the size of the public enterprise early within the economy. The problem at the moment is that there's no indication the government wants to argue around those principles including regulation.

You take the example of the moment. We are just about to deregulate television in a way, which enables almost anybody to buy into British television companies. You certainly don't have to be British to be a television company mogul if the new legislation is passed. Now the land of the free and the home of the brave insists that only its own nationals own its television companies, which is why Mister Rupert Murdoch had to become an American. We're going to be more deregulated in terms of television organization than the United States of America. Now, we've not begun in the new Labor Party, and I say we, because I'm still a member of it. It's a time to argue about where these boundary lines should be.

### **What's the relevance of socialism in today's world?**

I think socialist principles are far more relevant in a world, which is growing increasingly prosperous but doesn't know quite how to spend its prosperity. Certainly socialist principles have to be applied in a different way. Certainly the global market has given up any hope of there being socialism in one country. But if you take the most basic role of socialist principles, the need to build a more equal society, it simply becomes a need to build a more equal world, and we have to begin talking about how we can relate to the developing world. We have to talk about how we provide some sort of water for sub-Saharan Africa. We have to go out assisting the developing world without accepting or expecting to reciprocate, and we have to do it in own communities. There's nothing in the global market which prevents Britain at this moment from helping the people who are at the absolute bottom of the heap, the poorest people who from this very prosperous part of London a hundred yards away, two hundred yards away are sleeping rough at night. The global market doesn't stop us helping them. It's a will of politicians that stops in helping them. And the way we start doing that again is people speaking up and standing up for the socialist principles, somebody about 20 years younger than me. That's who we want to do it.

**In order to be free, does everyone have to be equal?**

I share the view of John Rawls that freedom and equality are indivisible. At least the sum the freedom is indivisible. If I had 10,000 pounds taken off my income every year by taxation, it wouldn't even inconvenience me. It certainly wouldn't make me any less free. I'd still be able to do all the things I wanted to do. If that 10,000 pounds was distributed amongst five poor people and each of them had an extra two thousand pounds to spend, they would be able to do more things that they want to do because they would have the physical capacity to do it. They would be freer. And freedom isn't just the absence of restraint. Freedom is the ability to do those things, which you choose to do in a free society, and you can only do them if you can afford them. And the people who can't afford them are un-free because they're poor and those of us who aren't poor could make them more free by taking part in a bit of redistribution. That's John Rawls entire life work summed up in thirty seconds.