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Are the first cuts the deepest?

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What has happened as far as the tally of injustice goes since the election results came out?

For a start the election made one of the graphs in [Injustice: Why social inequality persists](#) look slightly out of date. As predicted the Conservative segregation index rose even higher than before. If you have a copy of the book turn to page 175 and put an extra dot in the margin, where 2010 would be, at a height of 16.4%. What happened was that on May 6th 2010 the greatest swings towards the Conservatives occurred in the seats where they were most popular to begin with. This is a symptom of a still dividing country, but it is also a quite inefficient way to increase your support. Thus the Tories did not manage to secure an overall majority. They increased their vote most in the seats they already held. In some of the poorer parts of Britain, and especially in Scotland, the votes for Labour actually increased. The Liberals were squeezed out and lost seats in the middle of this polarisation. They ended up sharing power as no one could rule without them.

Today we saw the beginnings of what this increased political polarisation means, the very first cuts were announced. Among them George Osborne declared the demise of the (ever slowly slightly redistributive) Child Trust Fund, cutting payments of £320 million in 2010 and £520 million a year from 2011-2012. In the fund's place he announced new funding of an almost charitable nature: An extra £20 million each year from 2011 being spent on addition respite care, 8000 one week long breaks for severely disabled children.

What you should expect is much more of this. Cutting something which is actually redistributive and replacing it with something that costs only a tenth as much and is useful but tokenistic – aimed at the most 'deserving' of cases. Thus some 4000 council houses will be built; a paltry number, but just enough to salve a few consciences. It would be very better to reduce the wealth of the richest so many gave up their spare homes which others could then use. Similarly, there would have been no need for a Child Trust Fund in the first place had income differential not widened under New Labour.

Other cost cutting is also indicative of what kind of the world the Conservative-Liberal coalition would like to see emerge. David Laws, the Liberal Chief Secretary to the treasury, suggested that the £45 million costs of annual first class travel by public servants should be curtailed. This is good, but far better not to be running train carriages designed for different social classes into the twenty-first century in the first place. It is far simpler just to begin to abandon first class tickets for anyone, and that is the kind of thing a country that has just become a great deal poorer might have to begin to think of doing (to use track space more efficiently). Would David Cameron's dream of a big society still have first and second class travel, with just public sector workers, students, families and lower private sector management and anyone else not quite like him in 'economy'? I worry that is their dream. Too many still want a more unequal world.

Daniel Dorling, author of [Injustice: Why social inequality persists](#)

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