

## [If you don't pay for someone else's university course then you're violating their human rights apparently](#) [1]

Written by [Tim Worstall](#) [2] | Thursday 24 October 2013



A rather worrying document crosses my desk. [This one](#) [3], in which we are told the following:

The Task Force's human rights analysis begins by making a link between human rights and extreme poverty. For instance, the UN Human Rights Council has recently adopted Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights that describe how poverty is connected as a cause or consequence of violations of 14 different human rights and all the key human rights principles ? ranging from the right to food, the right to health, the right to education and the right to social security, to the principle of transparency.

Considering the negative impact that tax abuses have on poverty and human rights, the state has a number of obligations to counter tax abuses. These flow from states' obligation to use the maximum available resources to progressively realise human rights ? including the obligation to confront tax abuses as part of an overall plan to strengthen financial and tax governance.

This is the International Bar Association talking here: and it's an interesting perversion of human rights that has led us to this pretty pass.

That perversion is of course the idea that positive rights are human rights. It's pretty simple with negative rights: freedoms of speech, or association and so on. These cost nothing to provide, you just don't do things that would stop people having such rights. Positive rights, those rights to food, education, health care, they do indeed cost money to provide. In the UK at present something like 30 to 40% of everything the entire country produces in a year in fact. We must therefore violate someone's right to property to be able to provide those things to all. We thus have a conflict of rights and one or other of them has to give.

Now I'm not an advocate of our not having a state financed welfare, health care, education or social security system. Even the most minarchist state that I can imagine happening is going to have some role for government in those fields. Which inevitably leads to taxation of course. But I am arguing that we cannot include these positive rights in our definitions of human rights. For they directly conflict with others, with negative rights that we have already decided are indeed human rights.

Clearly and obviously the UN and the International Bar Association disagree with me on this point but I

wave a very English two fingers in their general direction. We're going to have government come what may and that inevitably means taxation to pay for it. But it's taking matters much too far to claim that my paying Johnny No VAT cash for cleaning my windows is a violation of Jimmy's human rights as he doesn't get a plaster for his cut finger.

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