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Think piece: "War or Class or some combination of the two" [1]

Written by **Preston Byrne** [2] | Monday 5 September 2011

The London riots seemed to confirm everybody's worldview, however different those views were. Was there some overarching lesson about class or the state, asks PJ Byrne, or were the riots simply a sad reminder that we are all animals, capable of good and bad choices?

Last month, Tom wrote that he was "glad to be out of London while the rioting and looting was going on", for while "it may have been chilly and damp in the Lake District... it was also peaceful and quiet." Nonetheless, he added, "watching the footage on the news, I couldn?t help thinking that most of those responsible were ?looters? long before they started smashing up JD Sports and setting shops on fire." Tom then provided an example of what he meant by quoting an extract from Ayn Rand's epic novel Atlas Shrugged, staple fare for any libertarian firebrand, where key protagonist Francisco D'Anconia said:

> "when a society establishes criminals-by-right and looters-by-law?men who use force to seize the wealth of disarmed victims?then money becomes its creators? avenger. Such looters believe it safe to rob defenseless men, once they?ve passed a law to disarm them. But their loot becomes the magnet for other looters, who get it from them as they got it. Then the race goes, not to the ablest at production, but to those most ruthless at brutality."

Tom's implication was, at least to me, abundantly clear: the looters were merely acting as they had been taught by the welfare state, by assuming that they were entitled, by right, to the property of others in a topsy-turvy world where the role of government, "instead of being a protector of man's rights... is becoming their most dangerous violator; instead of guarding freedom... is establishing slavery; instead of protecting men from the initiators of physical force... is initiating physical force and coercion in any manner and issue it pleases". (Rand, 1964) **[Continue reading...]** [3]

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