

[A breathtakingly silly piece of journalism](#) [1]

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The Guardian has published many silly pieces in its time, as have other papers, but [today it published a piece by Lynsey Hanley](#) [3] that must rank as one of the most breathtakingly silly of all time. The article claims that raising the income tax threshold to £10,000 patronizes the low-paid. Moreover it "disenfranchises 3 million people":

More fundamentally, it suggests that people on low wages are effectively earning pin money, not "proper" money that requires being taxed, and therefore that the low-waged aren't full citizens. The article goes on to say that if people don't pay towards public resources, they lose their perceived entitlement to them.

Where to start? First of all, low-paid people pay a great deal in taxation, especially in VAT, and many of them pay taxes on alcohol, tobacco and petrol, plus dozens of other unseen taxes. The £10,000 threshold only exempts them from income tax, which is quite reasonable when you realize it is below the minimum wage. If people are not earning the minimum, it makes no sense to take some of their money away from them. They still pay the other taxes. Secondly, if paying no income tax makes you lose your "perceived entitlement" to public resources, doesn't paying less tax than someone else give you less entitlement to them?

Lynsey Hanley claims that "a fundamental component of citizenship, however, is paying towards the ongoing work of building and maintaining resources for everyone to use." In her disoriented world people on pensions, or disabled people supported by the state would not appear to be full citizens. I disagree.

In her world "Tax cuts are always a sop, no matter who you're giving them to." Again, I beg to differ. When the state takes less of our money it isn't "giving" us anything, certainly not a sop, because the money does not belong to the state. She wants the poor to pay taxes to make them full citizens. "To tax *only* the rich, or the better off, is madness. It's disenfranchisement by any other name," she says. No it isn't. It is taking money to support public resources from those who can afford it rather than from those who cannot. The rich should pay the taxes for the same reason that gangster Willie Sutton robbed banks, "because that's where the money is." I like it when we succeed, by lowering top tax rates, in having the rich contribute a greater share of total taxation. That's what *should* happen.

I wonder how many of the low-paid would agree with her that they should be paying more income tax? I suspect you could count them all on the one finger they would use to indicate their opinion.

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