

# Jeremy Clarkson: Give to my new charity – Britain's Got Trouble

People are prepared to move mountains. And that's where my scheme comes in, because we are all passionate about the state of our nation

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Oh, dear. I think I've been a bit naive again. Because I sort of assumed that in the run-up to the general election, all three political leaders had made it pretty clear that cuts would be necessary, and that as a result, all of us had reconciled ourselves to a few years of eating less and buying fewer electrical gadgets.

I figured also that after we'd finished laughing uproariously at the plight of the Greeks, we'd realised that we, too, would be in for a similar period of austerity. But I was wrong, because so far as I can see, no one is prepared to change their lifestyle one iota.

Let us examine the case of Nottinghamshire. The Tory-controlled county council and the Labour-run Nottingham council propose to shave a total of about £100m from their spending and lose 2,000 jobs in the process. Have those affected reacted with a shrug of inevitability? Not a bit of it. They're all working to rule, and their union is making Churchillian noises about going to war.

It's not just council staff, either. You've also got a lot of middle-aged ladies jumping up and down on village greens protesting about plans to close their local library and not listening when anyone tries to explain it's all on the internet anyway.

Elsewhere, tax workers were outside the Treasury because their office opening hours have been cut and students in Glasgow were to be found

waving banners over plans to lose 18 staff from the university's biomedical and life sciences department.

Doubtless, the druids will be similarly angry after Danny Alexander told the Commons that a £25m visitor centre at Stonehenge will not now be built. I don't know how druids express anger but if Alexander turns up for work with a lot of warts on his face, I guess we'll know.

I spent a night with Louis Walsh to raise cash for Palestine. I even bought the chef Richard Corrigan and I'm damned if I can remember why. Whatever, the point is that no one seems to recognise the need for cuts in spending, and if they do, they don't think they should be involved. So what's to be done?

One chap called the Jeremy Vine radio show last week to discuss the problem with David Cameron. In a thick Birmingham accent, he pointed out that if you took all the money from the richest 100 people in Britain, all of our problems would be addressed and the other 60m people could carry on as before.

Amazingly, Cameron didn't think this was a very good idea, so the man from Birmingham came up with another one. The prime minister should work for nothing. And therein lies the problem. It's impossible, really, to get people to accept the cuts when so many of them are bonkers.

And because they're bonkers, there can be no doubt that when the cuts do start to bite, there will be much wailing and gnashing of teeth, along with a selection of petrol bombs and much police brutality. We are, it seems, on our way back to 1979.

Last week I suggested a way of averting this would be to cut off Scotland. But no one in power seems to be taking that idea seriously. So I have come up with another rather brilliant wheeze: register Britain as a charity.

The last time I looked, British people were giving more than £10 billion every year to help those less fortunate than themselves. That works out at more than £200 for everyone over the age of 16.

We put money in the slot to cure cancer, buy swimming pools for wounded soldiers, build orphanages in Romania, help keep drug addicts off smack, improve living conditions in Gaza: the list is endless. We give so much to charities for the blind that there are now more guide dogs than there are people for them to guide.

In recent months, I've bought pictures to provide music lessons for kids with learning difficulties, signed several rugby balls, supplied a boot full of dung to help keep my local town's lido open and then I spent a night with Louis Walsh to raise cash for Palestine. I even bought the chef Richard Corrigan at one party and I'm damned if I can remember why.

Then there's The Big Issue. I don't like it. I think it's boring. But it is the only magazine that I get every week. Sometimes I buy the same issue three times. Why? When I read Private Eye, which I enjoy hugely, I don't think, "Ooh. That was brilliant. I'm going to buy it again."

The reason is simple. We enjoy giving our money away. It makes us feel all warm and gooey. Which is why we almost always give whenever we are asked. No, really. I reckon that if I knocked on your door this afternoon, explaining that I was doing a sponsored drive to London, in a comfortable car, to raise money for the Amazonian tree warbler, you'd give me a tenner.

And think about what you're doing when you roll a 10p piece into the lifeboat on the bar of your local pub. You are paying to rescue some drunken idiot from Surrey who's had too many gin and tonics and fallen off his yacht in the Solent, that's what. But it doesn't stop you giving, does it?

Of course, when you are really passionate about a charity's aims, we are no longer talking about the odd 10p piece. People are prepared to move mountains, or at the very least climb them, to raise thousands. Tens of thousands, even. And that's where my scheme comes in, because we are all passionate about the state of our nation.

I'm proposing, then, that your local MP comes round to your house every week with a collecting tin and that instead of organising strikes and what have you, unions organise sponsored bike rides to Germany. We can all get behind this, eating as many pork pies in a minute and jumping out of aeroplanes, and then we can appear in our local newspapers, in fancy dress, handing over massively oversized cheques for huge amounts to the exchequer.

Other charities may react in horror to this but they shouldn't, because when the cuts come, they will suffer just like everyone else. If we adopt my scheme, the cuts won't come at all.