

## 1 **Why do the rich always think** 2 **everyone else is earning six figures?**

3 Original at:

4 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/aug/15/david-cameron-middle-class-wealth>

5 For a half a century, the British elite has pretended that it does not exist.  
6 "The class war is obsolete," Harold Macmillan declared after winning the  
7 1959 general election and then promptly formed a government which  
8 included a duke, three earls and a marquess. "I want to take class out of  
9 British politics," said Tony Blair and then presided over the largest bubble  
10 in capitalist history and an orgy of conspicuous consumption.

11 David Cameron and his wife believe that they are middle class, even  
12 though he is the son of a stockbroker and she the daughter of a baronet.  
13 This shows that they, too, possess the least attractive characteristic of the  
14 men (and occasional woman) at the top of the hierarchy. They cannot  
15 admit that they are privileged.

16 The rightwing press inadvertently produces evidence of the scale and  
17 persistence of the delusion. When the old Labour government considered  
18 removing charitable status from private schools, it described the proposal  
19 "as an attack on the middle class". Yet, parents who send their children  
20 private need to find a minimum of £10,000 per child per year after tax.

21 If middle class means being in middle of society, then the median wage in  
22 Britain in 2009 was £21,320. Admittedly, most households have two  
23 incomes. Even then, the Department for Work and Pensions says that the  
24 average household income for a couple with no children is the less than  
25 princely sum of £407 a week after tax. The typical middle-class Briton is  
26 not a doctor or barrister but a clerk or shop manager. They do not put  
27 their children's names down for Eton or worry about a 50% tax on tuition.

## Questions

- 1) What does the pronoun 'it' in line 5 refer to?
- 2) What does the discrepancy between the rhetoric of Harold MacMillan and Tony Blair on 'class war' and their respective actions consist of?
- 3) A similar contradiction with regard to the Camerons' is mentioned in the article. What is it?
- 4) What conclusion is drawn from these contradictions?
- 5) Why did the right wing press consider removing charitable status from private schools (i.e. the schools were no longer to be regarded as charities for tax purposes) an attack on the British middle class?
- 6) Was this appraisal justified according to the article? Why?
- 7) How much money does a theoretical middle class Briton earn per year?
- 8) What is Eton?
- 9) Now – explain the title of the article and its relation to the text in your own words.
- 10) Do you think that class war is over in the Czech Republic?

## Vocabulary

**take out** (line 8) – to withdraw; remove

**scale** (line 16) – range, size, extent, magnitude

**admittedly** (line 22) – used when you are admitting (agreeing) that something is true

**put down** (line 26-27) – to enter in a list, register for

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> or <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

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