



[The return of royalty](#)

by **Simon Belt**

The Royal family have been in the news quite a bit recently, and as a republican myself it's definitely irritating and, in a way, heartening. It's irritating that the royals are still in place and have such widespread coverage, especially around their patronising 'campaigning' work. Whilst they play at being just like the rest of us, they eat away at the mystery of what makes them royalty. In a funny way, they are merely demonstrating that it is simply privilege and wealth that separates us, and that isn't a good enough reason for them to be royal.

Their constitutional role is what makes them truly different, separates them from commoners, and so it's heartening to see the mystery disappear, albeit through their own PR machine rather than a republican cause. If they really want to be like the rest of us, that can easily be arranged by the removal of the constitutional baggage of royalty.

The current publicity that Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's plan to marry this year, following Prince William and Kate Middleton's marriage in 2011 is being looked at favourably by erstwhile republicans, well some of them anyway. The Guardian newspaper for example, has had relatively supportive coverage of the wedding plans and seem to suggest this may be a good thing for the nation. Why is that? Well, the modernising of an aloof monarchy isn't enough, so it's probably down to the fact that they somehow think it will be a good message to send to the nation.

I think the response to the girlfriend of UKIP leader Henry Bolton tweet about Meghan Markle tainting The Royal Family is instructive here. Clearly UKIP have been in the sites of many commentators and political types, largely pro-EU supporters, for a number of years for helping to focus widespread demand for a referendum on Europe, when the main parties were staunchly opposed to the electorate having a vote on it. But the response to this tweet and demands for Bolton to resign over it show how charged the issue is for some.

The importance of sending messages to the commoners these days seems to be the cohering factor for the middle classes these days. No longer is it enough to say that you have more money than others because you've worked hard for it, it's kind of embarrassing to suggest that in time of governments cutbacks on expenditure. Indeed, the BBC seem to have captured that mood well with getting some of their very well paid presenters to take a pay cut, whilst others wangle pay increases on the basis of sending out the right message.

The message the royals have been sending out over recent decades has turned from public service, which itself problematically took away from the mystique of the monarchy, to campaign work in support of good causes. Supporting good causes by being patron, or opening things, is one thing, but that trajectory has taken them further down the road into being the good cause. Prince Harry talking about the counselling he's sought over the death of his mother is inventing a role akin to the awareness advocacy the middle class find themselves using to give themselves purpose.

The whole awareness industry creates a relationship of the enlightened and the ignorant, of the controller of knowledge and the one who is granted knowledge through awareness campaigns. The middle class, and the aspirant middle class, have twigged onto a way of justifying their position in society as managers of resources, in a way that doesn't easily allow challenge. And here's where I think the the erstwhile republican pro-EU types have seen common ground with the PR wing of the royal family - having a God given right to control the messaging given to commoners, so their ignorance doesn't spill over into racist tweets.