

Dorling, D. (2015) Letter: Payback's a hitch, Times Higher Education, October 1st, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/letters/paybacks-a-hitch>

Payback's a hitch

October 1, 2015

Nick Hillman says, "I realise [that] some people in the sector will think that is a harsh view, but no political party opposing fees has won an election in the lifetime of current sixth-formers and it seems unlikely that is going to change any time soon." ("[Could Corbyn win mean less scrutiny of HE policy?](#)", 14 September.)

He appears to forget that for the first time since the Second World War the Liberal Party came to hold power for five years, albeit with the Conservatives. They secured enough MPs to do that on the basis of one promise that made them distinctive: their opposition to university fees. They failed to deliver on that promise and suffered for it at the polls in 2015.

University students, future students, those already paying back fees and the parents and grandparents of all these groups know that most of the loans currently being granted cannot be repaid. Even the current government now acknowledges that. Future taxpayers will have to make up any shortfall. These mostly are the same people who will not be able to repay their fees. The future bill will be enormous unless we find a better way to organise ourselves soon and stop pretending that we are so very different from countries such as Germany.

Accepting that the policies you have advocated for so long have failed is very difficult, but high fees and ever growing loans have now been tried and tested – and found wanting. One reason why leading Conservatives favour loans is that they are wealthy enough to pay their children's fees up front. There are no interest payments for them to make, and they get to pay less tax, including less inheritance tax. You can fool most people most of the time, but not forever.

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