

Could it happen here?

Riots on our screens are nothing new. Civil unrest is part of daily news and sadly we are used to hearing about uprisings in far flung places where the inhabitants have had enough of despotic regimes and oppressive conditions. Watching it on the streets of London and in daylight hours however, creates an entirely different feeling.

This morning streets of suburban London lie littered with burned out cars, gutted buildings, piles of broken glass and looted businesses; anarchy on a level rarely witnessed in modern times. While it is suggested that the shooting of a black man in suspicious circumstances in Tottenham last week was the spark that blew the powder keg, it is far too simplistic an explanation for what unfolded. It would appear that this was bubbling for a long time and just like a devastating tsunami or an earthquake, it seemed to come from nowhere and take everyone by surprise. The thing is this is not strange, unpredictable weather phenomena, but the actions of real people albeit a disaffected youth who seem to be nothing short of feral and without parental control. Were the authorities that out of touch that they couldn't see the anger and social breakdown amongst the Hoodies? Obviously they haven't been reading their own tabloids. This is just the antisocial behaviour on a grander and bolder scale with the resulting horrendous consequences. It is about the breakdown of communities and society where human values have become totally distorted. It's about the 'haves' and the 'have nots' where the ultimate prize is a piece of electronic equipment or cash regardless of the cost or consequences for others. Watching the footage of the initial night's rioting it was interesting that the main targets were the electronic shops with the cameras and the mp3 players. While the initial focus has to be on containment and restoring order the underlying problems remain. Hopefully this will have exposed that underbelly of poverty, boredom, unrest and general disregard by a whole section of society for people and property. It may even prove to be a tipping point but one fears that there will be a great deal more pain before the cancer is fully cut out or cured.