

the Socialist postbag

Do you have something to say?

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Grousing rich



Cameron and his millionaire cronies tell us that public sector cuts are hurting us all but that 'we're all in this together'. Well, not according to CKD Galbraith, a 'sports lets agency' (whatever that may be). They report "particularly strong demand for grouse shooting in Scotland as the 2011 season begins". They say that teams of grouse shooters will spend an average of £10,000 to £15,000 for a day's shooting. Well there you have it, life is really hurting at the top.

Tony Davison

Eyebrow to eyebrow

To read the press, you'd get the impression that the biggest political arguments ever in Britain were those between former Labour prime minister Gordon Brown and his chancellor Alistair Darling. Darling's new book quotes Blair's description of dealing with Brown as "like having dental treatment with no anaesthetic." He called Brown 'brutal and volcanic' while bad-mouthing the governor of the Bank of England and other top capitalists over perceived differences on the economy. But what real differences did these architects of a failed capitalist economic policy have? Did either of them argue against the system's attempts to throw all the costs of paying for the crisis onto the working class? No. There's not the width of one of Darling's eyebrows between him and his fellow-architect of New Labour. It's merely the miserable personal dislikes of failed careerists. If you want to read about real politics, read the Socialist.

Keith Whitehead

Absent fathers, sacked workers



Waltham Forest police are spending time and money tracking down 'absent fathers' of young people who are arrested. This plays perfectly to the tune of the reactionary idea that single mothers are to blame for all society's ills - because obviously women can't possibly bring up children on their own! Earlier this year our local council made huge cuts to Safeguarding Children, Community Learning and Skills, edu-

cation welfare officers, career advisers and even the Youth Offending service. It is these trained professionals who have a track record of helping vulnerable young people.

We should make it clear that we won't accept working class individuals or families being blamed for the problems in society.

Louise Campbell

Unions must take up youth issues

This weekend I received Arena, the Usdaw union membership magazine. The editorial by general secretary John Hannett discusses the recent riots' impact on shop workers.

Many shop workers will have had their workplaces destroyed, looted or burnt down. Correctly, he criticises companies who, when they have closed early, failed to pay staff their contracted hours (including some who now demand that staff make up the hours).

Deplorable though the destruction that



the rioting wreaked on working people's lives was, Hannett makes no attempt to explain or understand the anger that exploded. In a quote in the magazine he repeats the Tories' line on the riots: "There can be no excuse for it".

The same cuts and attacks that threaten the living standards of 400,000+ Usdaw members created the conditions for these riots to occur. Usdaw should take a leaf from the book of Youth Fight for Jobs.

They should take up the issues affecting young people to help draw them closer to the trade union movement. After all many young people who work in shops will be affected by government attacks on education, housing and other issues.

Iain Dalton, Leeds

Make rich pay

As I was walking through Nottingham I heard in the distance 'pay your taxes'. It was UK Uncut demonstrating about the offshore tax scam. On BBC's One Show someone said that if more tax inspectors were employed they would be able to claim billions back from the super-rich. It was compared to being able to win the lottery but refusing to buy the winning ticket.

And Thatcherism seems to be back. She closed the mining industry even though it was profitable. Thatcherism was terrible to go through; the poverty was unbelievable. It's sad to say that it is back but I wish people wouldn't revert to looting and violence.

But what about the bankers who have looted the taxpayers? If we claimed the trillions back from the banks and billions from the rich who put their money in offshore accounts, we would be able to help the sick and the poor. But dodgy Dave will not do this because the Tories are in with these fat cats.

A Nottingham socialist

Book review
Them and us

'Them and Us' by former Observer editor Will Hutton, originally published in 2010, is now available in paperback. Bob Severn reviews the book.

The title Them and Us suggests a combative book about the poor versus rich - unfortunately it is not. The book's focus is really its subtitle, Changing Britain - Why We Need a Fair Society, by which the author, Will Hutton, means a fair capitalist society.

'Them', according to Hutton, are "the financial plutocrats, incumbent corporate power and the networks of the super-rich". So the rest of 'us' includes the 'nicer' capitalists. While he condemns the 'unproductive' capitalists, and the greed of the bankers, with plenty of evidence, Hutton pins his hopes on 'productive capitalism'.

He wants another industrial revolution, and 'another Enlightenment', for the 'knowledge economy'. He wants more Alan Sugars, James Dysons and Richard Bransons. So more anti-union 'entrepreneurs', whose expertise includes driving down wages?

Big manufacturers are currently sitting on piles of cash. However, instead of investing in production, they are using that cash on the money markets due to "uncertainty over demand". Hutton disapproves but what alternative is he putting?

Hutton likes trade unions - except when they fight for their members! For example, he attacks print unions including journalists in the NUJ for practicing closed shops: "By the mid-1980s, the print unions were abusing their power with scandalous working practices, and obstructing the introduction of digital technology".

This repeats, like elsewhere in the book, the capitalist media's anti-union



propaganda and mistruths.

Yet, in barely the next breath, Hutton quotes from Nick Davies, writer of Flat Earth News, [reviewed in the Socialist 679 - Eds] saying: "Twenty years later, Davies's researchers calculated that a falling payroll of national journalists was writing three times more copy every year to fill ever more sections and magazines as the great titles competed for market share."

The 'power abuse' Hutton speaks of was actually defending jobs and conditions - not holding back technology, but trying to stop Murdoch using technology to sack workers, cut pay and attack workers' organisation.

Hutton doesn't want fighting trade unions, he wants consultative professional associations.

Hutton also condemns the 'third way' of Blair and New Labour, for giving too much power to the private sector. Yet, to me, the book puts forward a third way revisited, ie, a marriage of the public and

private sector.

He says there's a need for Keynesian pump-priming to help the economy into recovery. He says all three main parties' cuts plans are based on contentious growth predictions.

Hutton thinks that Labour's capital spending cuts (school building, road building etc), which the Con-Dems are now implementing, will be disastrous. But he also says that cuts are needed, just not as fast or as brutal as the Con-Dem government's plans.

For example, Hutton thinks we should pay for all services in the NHS, apart from urgent treatment, unless we're very poor. University fees must rise, he says, but state school students should get a big discount.

But what about the £120 billion of tax unpaid by the rich, which equals the figure that Hutton gives for the needed deficit reduction? Of course, the rich would not hand over this money voluntarily, and any real threat to their wealth would be answered with a strike of capital.

This is why these parasitic tax dodgers' resources should be put under public ownership and democratic control with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need. Then this wealth could be used to benefit all of society, instead of benefitting a few while the rest of us pay the cost.

Hutton's book is full of the crimes of the financial sector, the last New Labour government and the Tories. However, do not pin your hopes on the 'nice' capitalists, you're better off fighting for jobs and services, as shown in the Socialist.

Confronting a Labour cutter



Marching to defend the NHS photo Paul Mattsson

By a Socialist Party member

On 2 September Chris Bryant (Labour MP for Rhondda) was in Tonypandy. When I saw him; I thought it was a perfect opportunity to confront him about the brutal cuts in the NHS, especially in the mental health department. After all, his party voted to cut the NHS budget in Wales!

I told him that my mother has had three appointments cancelled by the mental health clinic and she has to wait until January for an appointment. I didn't think it fair on people with mental health illnesses

when the government are making all these cuts.

He replied that they are not making any cuts on the health board and no cuts have been made in the NHS. I asked why they are then closing St Tydfil's psychiatric hospital and cutting out nine beds at Royal Glamorgan psychiatric unit and turning people away.

I told him my mum went to a general mental health board meeting where even the secretary at the mental health clinic said they (Labour Party/ Welsh government) were making cuts.

He cannot say he has no responsibility when his party are the ones

implementing these cuts. Instead of fighting the cuts, he denies they are happening!

I asked why the two local general hospitals (Royal Glamorgan and Prince Charles) will be merged into one hospital, effectively closing a whole hospital and why the Health Board have announced £100 million worth of cuts, if they aren't making any cuts? Needless to say Chris Bryant was unable to answer.

Once he saw us setting up our Socialist Party stall against the NHS cuts he soon packed up and left. He tried to say there were no cuts but I think he is a liar and a disgrace.