

## thesocialistpostbag

### Do you have something to say?

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to Socialist Postbag, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD, or phone 020 8988 8771, email: editors@socialistparty.org.uk. We reserve the right to shorten letters. Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

### Poptastic toffs

Singer James Blunt's parents have complained that, following an article in The Word magazine claiming that 60% of today's pop and rock acts contain privately educated members, their son is being 'picked on'.



Blunt.

Producer Pete Waterman complained to the Today programme: "It's never been worse. The major companies dominate... if you haven't got 96 O-levels you ain't getting a job." As well as Blunt, other privately schooled pop stars include Lily Allen, Florence Welch and Chris Martin.

Blunt's dad, a former army officer, claims: "It's not about background; it's to do with their talent." However, I'm sure that there are many talented but poorer people who, without private education and the social links and opportunities that Blunt enjoyed, have been held back due to their background. This class divide will be made worse with the Con-Dems' plans for academies and free schools, which will be able to select pupils while reducing the funding for the remaining comprehensive schools.

**Bob Severn**

### Cam's crystal clear plans

If it wasn't clear before the election, the intention of the Tory government and their Liberal Democrat apologists are now crystal clear. Apart from cutting living standards for the working class in general they intend to take away the right to a decent education for anyone who cannot afford to pay for it and kill off the rest of us by getting rid of free health care!

The £9,000 a year tuition fees are totally unaffordable to ordinary workers. In fact anyone earning the minimum wage for a 37-hour week will only earn £8,556 a year after tax and national insurance so university is obviously going to be out of reach for ordinary workers' children.

The new academy in London that will be run by a bankers' group with a £6 million a year subsidy from the taxpayer is refusing to let children from a nearby council estate enrol. So the best option for these children will probably be an impoverished, sub-standard secondary school funded by the education department in that area.

Then there's the changes (cuts) to the NHS which will mean a much reduced health service for all of us who don't have private insurance - maybe the overall plan is for great swathes of us to die for lack of decent health care which will then reduce the state pension bill.

**Mary Jackson, Doncaster**

### Banker 'unfit for trial'

A US federal judge has ruled that Texan billionaire banker Allen Stanford is unfit to stand trial at present over accusations that he led a \$7 billion (£4.5 bil-

lion) fraud scheme.

He is accused of running a scheme which persuaded investors to buy certificates of deposit from Stanford International Bank, located in Antigua, which "promised returns that were too good to be true".

Exactly the same kind of behaviour by British bankers was taken as a sign of financial acumen. So was their ability to rook the taxpayer out of billions. In this country Stanford wouldn't be in jail at all, he would be in line for a bonus! Apparently Mr Stanford cannot stand trial because of his addiction to anti-anxiety medicines. It is just possible his victims suffered a bit of anxiety too.

If this sounds familiar, you only have to remember the 1990s Guinness fraud trial. Ernie Saunders was released because he was suffering from Alzheimer's and subsequently became the only person ever to recover from the disease. Money can't buy happiness but it can apparently purchase medical miracles!

**Derek McMillan**

### Brute force and ignorance

Hugh Orde, the head of the Association of Chief Police Officers, criticised the "lack of willingness of new protest groups" that have sprung up around the internet to engage with police before protests. In fact police have "cooperated" by "kettling" protesters.

Orde is determined to go back to the days of the miners' strike when the boys in blue were regarded as Maggie Thatcher's private army. Orde admitted that kettling was a violation of human rights. Then he gave a shrug. So what? It's "for the greater good, and that's the really complex part of policing".

He said if protesters continued to refuse to cooperate, then police tactics would have to become "more extreme". The police themselves face the same problem as has arisen in the health service and education - unqualified and underpaid staff replacing qualified officers as a way of cutting costs. Community Support Officers bringing in policing on the cheap. What next? Sherlock Holmes being replaced by Inspector Clouseau? He may be crap but he's dead cheap. And the sons and daughters of police officers are having their future taken away by this government. The introduction of sky high fees will affect them as much as anyone else. Hugh Orde's policy of brute force and ignorance is hardly likely to address these issues.

**Michael Davis**



Police spokesperson Hugh Orde.

### Care in the community?

My daughter recently moved out of a shared house into a place of her own run by the local council. Despite her being a vulnerable adult, she had hardly any supported cover from the firm who, through social services, are supposed to provide a service called Supported Living.

There were problems with pickups be-

cause staff had been wrongly allocated to go to her previous address. Does that mean that people can't be allowed to make progress because the privately run firm and severely cutback council services cannot cope with people changing their addresses?

I recently attended a consultation meeting at a day centre. All the people at this meeting were parents/ carers of vulnerable adults, worried by the cutbacks that Notts county council want to implement. Some may only get two days' attendance at the day centre, therefore limiting their lives.

I thought 'Care in the Community' was meant to enhance people's activities not return them to Victorian times where vulnerable people were hidden away or kept at home.

**Mrs F A Jackson, Mansfield**

### Anti-cuts inaction

Anti-cuts campaigns in Kent, such as in the Medway towns, are building a head of steam despite opposition from the Labour Party in the area. A Kent-wide meeting of anti-cuts groups is planned for 5 March.



In Dover, however, at a recent 'public meeting' called by the GMB union, the organisers disgracefully stifled public debate and the appetite for independent action against the cuts. Instead of using the gathering of 50 people to form a local, broad-based anti-cuts campaign, the meeting's organisers simply told attendees to vote Labour and attend the TUC demonstration on 26 March.

Only three workers from the floor managed to speak despite the chair's objections, and all were critical of the Labour Party and its pro-cuts stance. The Socialist Party will continue to encourage the formation of independent, local campaigns in opposition to all cuts and we are ready to take a stand against all politicians wielding the axe.

**Ben Hickman, Kent**

### Outside 'help'

Back in 2002/3 a host of newspapers and TV comments justified the coming war on Iraq. One argument was that the Iraqi people were so oppressed by Saddam Hussein that they could only overthrow him with outside help. Result - 25,000 Iraqi civilians dead in the first two years after the war. Possibly as many civilians dead since 2003; over 4,400 US and 179 British servicemen and women killed.

In 2011 the Tunisian people overthrow another brutal dictator, without 'help' from Western governments (who propped up Ben Ali for years). Result - 110 dead. The revolution is far from over and the loss of any life is regrettable, but it is certainly a lot less bloody than the 'help' Bush and Blair delivered to 'liberate Iraq'.

**Jon Dale**

## TV Review

# Posh and Posher

## Why Public School Boys Run Britain



Just as in the 1930s, public school boys still rule the cabinet.

**A**NDREW NEIL is a Tory-sympathising BBC journalist. It must say a lot about the present state of British politics that he would present this documentary, *Posh and Posher: Why Public School Boys Run Britain*.

**Jethro Waldron**

He laid out the balance sheet right at the start. While only 7% of the population attended private school, one in three MPs are privately educated. Over half of the Con-Dem cabinet were educated at elite public schools like Eton.

Neil's documentary was surprisingly provocative. From the beginning, he asked whether millionaire Con-Dem MPs can really understand the implications of their cuts programme for working-class people.

Representatives of all the establishment parties were asked why so many politicians come from elite backgrounds. Lib Dem MP Sarah Teather could only say that the issues involved are 'subtle' and couldn't suggest how inequalities in education could be solved.

But she expanded on this 'subtlety' in the next breath: "if you come from a wealthier background you're more likely to get a good education, you're more likely to reach the top."

The question of access to a good education is a question of wealth and a question of class. Teather had unwittingly implied the necessity of a socialist programme to solve these deep-rooted inequalities.

This is why the Socialist Party goes further than Neil, who quite rightly suggested that working class young people should have better access to high-quality education. Unfortunately, his suggestion was to bring back the two-tier education system of grammar schools and secondary moderns.

The Socialist Party believes in comprehensive education. However, we believe that the comprehensive system should receive a massive increase in resources and funding. This means more teachers, on better pay and conditions, smaller class sizes and better facilities.

We believe that the £850 billion used to bail out the banks should be pumped into public services like education.

We need to take the banking sector into genuine, democratic public ownership, with the profits being used to benefit society rather than line the pockets of a tiny handful of billionaires.

All of the establishment parties, including Labour, stand for cuts in education and we need to build a mass campaign to stop them in their tracks. At local level councils controlled by all three parties are savaging public services. It was Labour who bailed out the banks and asked working-class people to foot the bill.

We need a new mass workers' party as an alternative to the Con-Dems and New Labour - to argue the case for a socialist way of running society in the interests of people, not profit, and to create a well-funded, inclusive and equal education system.

## Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine  
February 2011 issue includes:

- **A new year of struggle**  
We are now in an era of big social movements in Britain, argues Peter Taaffe.
- **The AV referendum**  
How should socialists vote in May? Clive Heemskerk looks at the issues involved.
- **Wikileaks lessons**  
Judy Beishon writes on Wikileaks, state repression, and the limits of the new media.

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