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BIG SOCIETY? ...BIG CON!

Fight all cuts - for real jobs and services

BEHIND ALL the talk of “localising power”, “enabling” and so on, the Tory vision of the ‘Big Society’ has been exposed in all its gory glory. The Con-Dems want to sack hundreds of thousands of professionally trained public sector workers and to instead provide vital services on the cheap with volunteers.

Dave Reid

But things are not going entirely to plan. Even Dame Elisabeth Hoodless, the so-called Mother of Big Society, said that government cuts to public funding for charities

are “destroying” volunteering. The Tories hope that charities and community organisations will provide public services, but the government is cutting the very organisations it has in mind for the job!

So now the Tories intend to force the unemployed to provide services for nothing. While there are five job-seekers for every vacancy, desks for charities like the Prince’s Trust will be placed in Jobcentres to ‘steer’ the young unemployed towards ‘volunteering’. The Tories have threatened jobless young people with having to work for their Jobseeker’s Allowance.

Why should young people work for nothing? Apparently Lord Wei,

the government’s own volunteer tsar, was shocked to discover that he was not going to be paid for volunteering in his job. He subsequently cut back his hours. This is supposed to be the model for the Big Society. Imagine if the volunteer home help for the elderly decided to cut back their hours at the last minute?

David Cameron dresses cuts up with fancy words like “mutualisation” but the reality is that the Con-Dems want the most vulnerable people in society to throw themselves on the mercy of charities. Crucial services like homecare would be available only to the ‘deserving poor’ at the whim of unelected, unaccountable charities.

The Con-Dems’ model for their Big Con is the ‘welfare state’ of the United States. Look at the state of Florida. In the richest country in the world a church has set up a camp for the unemployed who have lost their homes with 255 tents and 28 huts in Clearwater.

The Salvation Army provides a bed for some of the unemployed in Sarasota. But there is not even this scant provision for the jobless in Venice, Florida. In a horrendous return to the conditions of the 1930s Great Depression, hundreds who have lost their houses are forced to camp out in the woods.

But in Britain polls show that 65% of people already understand that

the Big Society is just an attempt by the government to put a positive spin on cuts. Working class people in Britain will not allow their rights, fought for by generations, to be swept away by this bunch of incompetent public school boys. We will not return to the 1930s.

- No to all cuts in jobs and services
- For a 24-hour public sector strike, as the first step of a mass movement to defeat the cuts

Join the TUC national demo on Saturday 26 March
Assemble Victoria
Embankment, London, 11am



SUZANNE BEISHON from Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) was recently quoted on the front of the Metro free paper saying: “Volunteering is all very well but there’s a risk it’s just using young people as cheap labour, before kicking them back on the dole – there are no jobs being created. At the same time, this government is raising tuition fees and scrapping the Educational Maintenance Allowance, both of which would keep young people in education.” YFJ calls for massive investment in education and a programme of socially useful work.