

# Hidden by hacking scandal, Cameron seeks wholesale privatisation of services

**Sarah Sachs-Eldridge**

A major attempted theft has been obscured from public view by the phone hacking scandal. On Monday 11 July prime minister David Cameron launched a White Paper, 'Open Public Services'.

It proposes the wholesale privatisation of all public services, which for most people will mean 'unaffordable' or even 'closed' public services. The next generation could be robbed of its right to decent education, health, care and other essential services.

In his launch speech millionaire Cameron said the era of "old fashioned" delivery of public services would be ended. But in reality these plans, if implemented, would take us back to Victorian times where services were provided at the whim of private interests.

The Guardian has obtained documents under the Freedom of Information Act which reveal that the plans for control of services at local level include the potential for "schools, hospitals, social care systems and nurseries to fold without the government stepping in to prop them up".

Cameron's weasel words, promising to put "power in people's hands", will not disguise this crime. On the day private profiteers proved they cannot be relied on to provide our



**Cameron's policies for public services will take us back to Victorian times** photo SP

services, with the collapse of private care provider Southern Cross, Cameron had the breathtaking gall to present his plans to sell off the rest of our public services to private vultures.

Cameron blamed the collapse of Southern Cross, a massive company that provided residential care to 31,000 people and had 44,000 employees, on the previous Labour government, also pro-privatisation fundamentalists.

In July 2010, following the first Con-Dem emergency budget, the boss of one private profiteering contract company, Carillion, was said to be "excited" by the prospect of spending cuts.

But most ordinary people will not feel that way about further privatisation, which has already brought misery to millions. The destruction this process has wrought, under successive Tory and Labour governments, has been seen, in particular,

on the railways, in our hospitals and in wage packets.

The press has made much of a so-called 'scaling down' of these plans from those originally outlined, with the Lib Dems claiming responsibility. But Clegg's lot also fear losing the ear of big business and insist that they are not opposed to 'reform' ie privatisation and cuts.

Cameron and Co have come under pressure - but not from their Lib Dem partners in crime so much as

public opposition to privatisation and cuts.

A recent Financial Times poll shows support for the axing of public spending has fallen faster in Britain than in the US or the major European economies. As the paper's economics editor remarks: "The results will make it difficult for Mr Osborne to go to the country and ask for further belt-tightening."

But slowing these vicious thieving 'reforms' is not enough. Dave Prentis, general secretary of Unison the public sector union, correctly warned that Cameron's privatisation scheme entails "removing protections on workers' pay and conditions, creating a race to the bottom, so that services are more attractive to private buyers."

On 30 June striking public sector workers expressed opposition to all cuts and privatisation. While a good start workers knew that a one-day strike by four unions would be insufficient to stop the government's plans. So far Prentis, despite his angry words, has not named the day for a union-wide strike ballot against the pensions robbery despite huge support for such a tactic.

A 24-hour public sector general strike is urgently needed and would provide a channel for the enormous anger against this latest proposal. As such it would have the support of millions of anti-cuts campaigners, students and service users.

## NoW phone hacking scandal

### Tommy Sheridan conviction "unsound"

**Philip Stott**  
Socialist Party Scotland

Tom Watson, the Labour MP who has been to the forefront of the campaign to get to the truth about the phone-hacking scandal, has told parliament that Tommy Sheridan's conviction for perjury "was unsound and should be revisited".

Tommy's lawyer Aamer Anwar has asked Strathclyde Police to begin an inquiry into whether former News of the World (NoW) editor Andy Coulson committed perjury during Tommy's trial.

Murdoch's NoW, full of anti-working class hatred and salacious tales, pursued the well-known socialist and former Member of the Scottish Parliament Tommy Sheridan over allegations about his personal life. NoW's defeat in the original libel trial was a remarkable victory for a working class fighter over the might of Murdoch's empire.

NoW then systematically conducted a vendetta against him, and masses of money and police hours were spent to bring Tommy to trial for perjury, in an attempt to destroy a symbol of one of the most successful mass struggles in British labour movement history, the mass anti-poll tax battle.

During Tommy's perjury trial, Andy Coulson claimed that he knew nothing about the hacking of Tommy Sheridan's phone, even though Tommy's details were found in Glenn Mulcaire's (the

private investigator hired by NoW and jailed in 2007 for phone hacking) seized documents.

Coulson also denied ever paying bribes to police officers. Furthermore, Bob Bird, the Scottish editor of the NoW, said he knew nothing about the hacking of Tommy Sheridan's phone or any other surveillance methods used by the NoW.

Coulson also claimed that he could not find emails between the NoW and Glenn Mulcaire about the investigation that the paper did into Tommy Sheridan, as they had been "shipped off to Mumbai".

But the email correspondence is in fact in a warehouse in London. It has been reported that the emails suggest Coulson authorised payments to police.

The reality is that the jury was denied a full picture of the lengths, including the money they paid, that the NoW went to in order to discredit Tommy Sheridan. If they had been given all the facts then it is likely the jury would have arrived at a different verdict. As it was, the jury only found him guilty by a majority of eight to six.

In addition, had these revelations about the NoW hacking of Milly Dowler and others, including Tommy Sheridan, been made available before Tommy Sheridan's perjury trial, rather than covered up by the police, there would have been no possibility of a conviction.

In the light of what has happened in the last few days, Tommy Sheridan should be released.

## Nothing New in the World at Wapping

**Peter Jarvis**  
a National Graphical Association picket

The police working for News of the World... phones hacked... what's new? The printers and their trade union supporters who fought Murdoch back in 1986 believed the police worked directly for News International and our phones were certainly tapped.

Murdoch had transferred his papers to Wapping from Fleet Street, and in the process sacked the 5,000 employees who made his fortune. His aim was to rid his papers of any trade union influence.

The Wapping stable of papers supported Thatcher and she returned the favour. Following the defeat of the miners, her government could not allow the print workers to win, so the forces of the state were put at the disposal of one press baron.

Each night during the year long battle, the strikers attempted to delay the distribution of the papers. On the smaller marches, after some gentle jostling the police would shove us easily onto the pavement, but on the days the demonstrations numbered thousands a serious struggle would take place and it would take hours before the coppers gained full control of the streets.

Our problem, the scab lorries could escape from numerous exits, Thomas More Street at one end and Glamis Road at the other - nearly one mile apart.

However, on the days we controlled the exits, a group of agent pro-



**Sacked printworkers at the Wapping picket line** photo Dave Sinclair

vocateurs would pelt the police and this was the signal for the police to attack.

Following the initial forays into the crowd by riot police, cavalry charges would be used to disperse our mass picket - they rode down fleeing workers.

Militant (forerunner of the Socialist) supported the mass picketing strategy. On the TUC-called demonstration, the police were unable to release the lorries from fortress Wapping, but unfortunately the TUC sent everyone home and the lorries and vans escaped, although late.

The print unions were fighting for their very existence and not just in Fleet Street. Militant demanded a national newspaper strike. Stopping the distribution of the papers would have boosted morale but the key to

victory was escalating the industrial action. With the national papers stopped, other support could have been organised.

The unions exercised some restraint on the more reactionary content of Murdoch's papers and had refused to print certain editorials. This challenged Murdoch's right and his right alone to decide the content. After the defeat, future printers and journalists became tame puppets and Murdoch's dictatorship was never again challenged.

Not one tear should be shed for the News of the World bosses. Now let's work to bring the rest of Murdoch's empire to its knees. If the public inquiry was genuine then it would investigate the collusion of the government, police and Murdoch back in 1986.