

# Tory sleaze is back!

Emma Smith

The squeamish should look away now. With 'Murdochgate' ongoing, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism has exposed further rotten sleaze at the top of government with claims from Bell Pottinger, a 'lobbying' outfit, that they could sell access to prime minister David Cameron, foreign secretary William Hague and other top Tories.

The noxious gases around parliament frequently create such stinky explosions. In February we learned that over half the Tories' funding came from banking. This month the Mirror reports that: "Out of £2.8 million donated in the three months to October, 60% came from firms and individuals linked to finance, hedge funds, property and other City activities."

And now, somewhat expectedly, yet another Tory pledge has hit the deck. Five years ago Cameron preposterously proffered a declaration of intent to "tackle lobbying". In 2010 he tried to sell it again. In November the Guardian exposed the hundreds of lobbyists making free with the Houses of Parliament, from oil multinationals to abortion campaigners. In October we endured the downfall of disgraced defence minister Liam Fox. It's unsurprising that many suffer from outrage overload.

According to the Independent that broke the Bell Pottinger story, Tim Collins, managing director of Bell Pottinger Public Affairs, said to undercover BIJ reporters: "I've been working with people like Steve Hilton [Tory 'director of strategy'], David Cameron, George Osborne for 20 years-plus. There is not a problem getting the messages through."

Collins' colleague David Wilson is reported to have boasted that the firm was the "most powerful public affairs business in the country". In the BIJ 'sting' it is claimed that Bell Pottinger worked hard for the government of Sri Lanka to "balance" out the accurate reports produced by Channel 4 about the recent war and its aftermath in Sri Lanka which saw tens of thousands of Tamil-speaking people brutally massacred.

The Con-Dems' open invite to multinational corporations to have input into policies on health, food, etc are a logical conclusion of their slavish adoration of the profiteers. This undermining of the democratic process is supplemented by plans to cut the number of MPs by 500 and cut services that ensure enrolment on the voting register.



photo Paul Mattsson

They must be replaced by those who will actually represent us. We demand workers' MPs on a worker's wage, who are subject to recall. That requires building a new mass workers' party, a class-struggle party.

With the determined mood on N30 combined with disgust at a Labour leadership that failed to offer support to strikers or any real opposition to the Con-Dems – this will now be the logical conclusion drawn by an increasing number of those involved in the fightback.

See [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk) for more on standing a trade unionist and socialist challenge in elections.



## Them & Us

### Merry Xmas...

The total UK personal debt at the end of October 2011 stood at an incredible £1,451,000,000,000 – an average household debt of £55,808 according to the financial education charity Credit Action.

The average debt for every adult is nearly £30,000, a figure likely to rise as the government's cuts and the economic downturn bites deeper. This is reflected in the huge surge of debt enquiries which the Citizens Advice Bureaux have to deal with, and in the alarming statistic that one person every minute (during the working week) is being declared insolvent.

Other statistics show:

**101** - properties were repossessed every day during the third quarter of 2011

**142** - new people became unemployed for more than 12 months every day during the year ending September 2011

**1,611** - people reported to have become redundant each day from July to September 2011

as a "not so great general strike", Clarkson was let loose in his Saturday column to abuse victims of the increasing suicide rate on the tube.

He wrote: "get the train moving as soon as possible and let foxy woxy and the birds nibble away at the smaller, gooey parts that are far away and hard to find."

But this time Clarkson faces his Waterloo. Union leaders called for his sacking. Trade unionists suggested he find work in Colombia and Guatemala where trade unionists have been shot by paramilitaries.

An Amnesty International blog suggested that Saudi Arabia is just the country for him, where public executions of those who challenge the government are not uncommon.

Cameron dismissed his pal's comments as "silly". It was reminiscent of when he kindly insisted his friend Andy Coulson get a "second chance", just like everyone deserves – apart from those young people caught up in the riots who faced severe sentencing and ruined lives.

### ... if you're a banker

But it's not bad news for everyone – Barclays is planning to pay a total of £5 billion in bonuses and perks to its bosses. The move came after Bank of England governor Mervyn King appealed to the banks to keep the cash from the bonuses to build reserves to aid the ailing economic situation.

### With friends like these...

Jeremy Clarkson is a close friend of PM David Cameron. As well as both being millionaires they share a hatred of trade unions.

While DC was dismissing the N30 strike as a 'damp squib' his friend launched a pre-planned attack on N30 participants, calling for them to be shot in front of their families. The Times reported that the BBC was aware of – and approved – the attack in advance.

In the response sent to the 30,000+ who complained the BBC claimed that Clarkson "apologised". But Clarkson merely said that he is happy to apologise alongside the BBC. But the BBC did not apologise. And now Clarkson has denied the BBC claim that he apologised.

In the Sun, which ridiculed the strike

### Wage inequality

In the face of record pay rises for top company bosses and pay cuts for millions of workers, the government's austerity measures mantra – 'we are all in it together' – is sounding more risible by the day.

In fact, according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the divide between the wages of the rich and poor is growing throughout the world.

In the 22 countries examined, researchers found that in 17 of them wage inequality grew between the 1980s and the financial crisis of 2008. They listed Chile, Mexico, Turkey and the USA as the most unequal nations. Inequality rose the fastest in the UK.

Just on salaries alone, leaving aside wealth accumulation, the report found that, in these 22 OECD countries, the richest 10% of the population earns nine times more than the poorest.

In the UK, the annual average salary for the richest 10% of wage earners in 2008 was £55,000 – 12 times higher than the average for the bottom 10%.

In October 2011 it was reported that the total annual pay for company directors now averages £2.7 million, a 49% increase on 2010.

## Reading the riots

Suzanne Beishon  
Youth Fight for Jobs

A Guardian/London School of Economics study has shown that Britain's summer 'riots' were fuelled by anger at injustice, the lack of money, jobs and opportunity, and how young people "felt they were treated compared with others".

A former Met police chief, Lord Stevens, has predicted years of public disorder due to the economic crisis.

This confirms the riots were not the result of "pure criminality" nor the breakdown of families, as Tories and right-wing commentators say. They happened because young people felt completely cast aside.

As a 23 year-old in Wavertree, Liverpool said: "It doesn't really matter if it's Labour or Conservative because the people behind the scenes are always the same, but especially this particular Conservative government ... It's in their eyes, you know what I mean? They hate the lower classes."

Sky-high levels of youth unemployment; education being snatched away; youth services being closed down; combined with the police harassment of young people, especially black and Asian youth, under the hated 'stop and search' laws – that's why we saw an outpouring of raw anger, as Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) said at the time.

YFJ supporters do not condone violence. We are building a movement where young people fight



photo Paul Mattsson

alongside trade unionists and anti-cuts campaigners, so that legitimate anger can be channelled positively.

YFJ organised meetings and protests in Tottenham, where the first 'riot' took place following the police killing of Mark Duggan.

YFJ demands real jobs, training schemes and apprenticeships. We say no to slave labour 'workfare' schemes. Education is a right, fees should be abolished and EMA reinstated. We call for a programme of house rebuilding and refurbishment to create affordable social housing and to provide work.

We demand a future. The rich carry on getting richer while we see our youth clubs closed – why should we pay for their crisis?

Get in touch with YFJ:  
[www.youthfightforjobs.com](http://www.youthfightforjobs.com)

## All in it together

The day after N30, BBC's Question Time confirmed the need for a new mass party of the working class. Labour MP Chuka Umunna, sponsored by Unite the Union, revealed he did not use his N30 strike vote as his gold-plated pension was not affected, and he opposed the strike anyway. The public sector pension problem 'had to be addressed' he said.

Tory Minister Ken Clarke was so delighted with Chuka that he congratulated him on recognising that there was a 'problem'. Clarke has spent the last ten years on the boards of the country's most prosperous companies: British American Tobacco, Alliance Unichem, Foreign & Colonial Investment Trust, Centaurus Capital Hedge Fund.

You can almost see the cash cascading into his already bloated bank account on top of his parliamentary salary and his £1 million pension pot. This sleek member of the millionaire's cabinet uttered the usual claptrap that while 'sympathising' with millions of public sector workers 'tough decisions had to be made' because there was no money left; a classic Tory distortion.

In fact billions are swilling around in the tax-payer subsidised banks. Billions are salted away by Clarke's friends in off-shore accounts. And there's the £100 billion of unpaid taxes. If all this wealth was harnessed for the benefit of the 99% the deficit problem could be solved overnight. Opposition to all cuts must be maintained!

Tony Mulhearn

## 'What we heard'

believe he was carrying an 'iron rod'. This threatening weapon in his rucksack turned out to be a tin whistle for making music.

Jenny Brooks