

IS THERE A GREEN ALTERNATIVE?

The General Election is looming and the question is will May 7 stop the downhill slide that workers have suffered for five years. Radical parties Syriza and Podemos have emerged in Greece



Graham Elliott

and Spain, both committed to ending the policies of austerity. In Scotland the SNP has shifted well to the left of Labour and could reduce that party to a rump.

Regrettably there is no one anti-austerity party in England. Of the parties standing in Waveney the Green Party is nearest to the policies of Lowestoft Coalition Against the Cuts. Its candidate, Graham Elliot, spoke at our last meeting and there is a good account of what was said in the minutes already circulated. The Greens have quadrupled their membership recently and their policies now include free education, renationalisation of the railways, the restoration of benefits, the living wage, stopping tax dodging,

We didn't vote for these cuts and this is our alternative*...

End tax dodging believed to cost £150 billion a year

Tax the rich

Stop the disastrous foreign wars, expenditure on weapons of mass destruction and invest in green jobs

Stop the bankers paying themselves obscene bonuses

Levy a Robin Hood tax on bank turnover

*Resolution passed at LCAC launch rally - 2 March, 2011

scrapping Trident and a more democratic Europe.

Graham was well-received, indeed when asked what LCAC policies, as printed on the back of this leaflet, the Greens disagreed with there didn't seem to be any. The Green Party's roots in environmentalism are still there but there is also a belief that green issues can not be tackled in an unjust society in which greed rules.

So what are our differences? Leaving aside Graham's misguided decision to support the mass house building programme on the Brooke Peninsula, how determined is the Green Party to seriously tackle the great disparity of wealth, income and power which grows wider year on year? And does the Green Party fully understand how far workers rewards and workers' rights have been undermined?

How far would the Green Party tax the rich? Taking public services back into public ownership is to be staged as is the move to the living wage. The Green Party's spokesperson has said that defence spending plans would continue even if Trident was scrapped. Graham honestly admitted that he did not know his party's policies on trade union rights or employment tribunals but promised to find out.

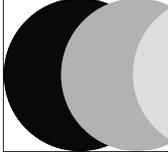
The Greens and the SNP might be able to play hard ball with Labour in return for their support. They might be able to get across the anti-austerity message. These issues are central to the future of the country.

WHAT YOU CAN DO...

- Support LCAC by joining our leafleting every Saturday, 11-1pm, in the town centre precinct, outside the Britten Centre.
- Join our email list - keep up to date with activity in your area.
- Photocopy this leaflet and pass onto friends and workmates.
- Want to know more? We can supply a speaker for your group or trade union branch.

Contact us

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LOWESTOFT COALITION AGAINST THE CUTS

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WHAT GEORGE DIDN'T MENTION...

BUDGET SPECIAL

George Osborne's Budget is obviously designed to get the Tories elected in May and is more notable for what it doesn't say than what it does. There are subsidies for first time home buyers and next year

the personal tax allowance goes up by £200. Income from savings of up to £1000 will be tax free.

The effect on most people will be small, as little as the penny off the price of a pint. If you don't earn much you won't benefit much and few get anything close to £1000 from their savings. The help-to-buy ISA will simply add to the competition for houses and is likely to push up prices.

Not mentioned are the continuing cuts to government spending, cuts to local services, as well as to pay and pensions in the public sector and outsourced companies.

Not only will these be bigger than anything seen over the past five years Osborne's pretence that "the sun is starting to shine" is as phoney as his smile. Insecure, short term and badly-paid jobs are now the norm for the indebted young and the not-so-young. More food banks will open. Targets for shifting people off benefits will be tightened and encouragement into dubious self employment increased. We will have to work longer to get to our shrunken pensions. In the meantime fraud and deception by the banks is uncovered but no-one goes to jail and bankers get bonuses. The sun is shining ever more brightly on the rich. George didn't mention that.

GEORGE DOESN'T CARE

Spending cuts matter because they mean cuts to the most vulnerable. In order to save £11.5m Suffolk County Council sold its care homes, including Blyford and Stradbroke Court in Lowestoft, to private equity company CareUK.

After delays and forced closures CareUK has opened new homes including Britten Court in Lowestoft. As we predicted the majority of experienced staff have left, training has been downgraded and new staff are paid up to £2 per hour less.

Residents and staff will pay for these cuts and CareUK will profit. The Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust, which deals with

patients with mental health issues, faces additional cuts of £44m over five years, has suffered botched reorganisations, a failed attempt at semi-privatisation is now in "special measures". Its Chief Executive had his pay bumped up by 35% when he joined; average staff salaries have shrunk by 18% in three years.

This year Suffolk County Council has cut another £38m from its services. Cuts include £5m from older peoples services, £5.1m from Children's and Young People's Budget and £4.1m from Health and Social Care. The County is rapidly divesting itself even of our schools.

So why is George smirking?



www.lowestoftagainstthecuts.org.uk