

BUDGET 2015: WHAT GEORGE DIDN'T MENTION...



George Osborne's Budget was 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 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 out-sourced companies.

These be bigger than anything seen over the past five years. Osborne's claim 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 upped and more pressured into dubious self employment. We will have to work

longer to get 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

Cuts hurt the most vulnerable. To save £11.5m Suffolk County Council sold its care homes, including Blyford and Stradbroke Court in Lowestoft, to private equity company CareUK.

After scandals and delays CareUK 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 and 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.

Suffolk County Council has cut £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?

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



THE BIG QUESTION TO BE ANSWERED

ELECTION SPECIAL

Lowestoft Coalition Against the Cuts has been campaigning against the policies of the Coalition Government since 2011 when LCAC was formed. We are constantly told that cuts to wages and conditions at work, to pensions and benefits, to services as well as the privatisation of public services are necessary because "the money isn't there".

Yet the country is richer than it has ever been. Much richer, for example, than after the Second World War when the NHS was created and the railways, along with other utilities, were nationalised. The problem is who has got the money. Money has been flowing into the pockets of the rich for forty years and cuts and austerity ensure that the transfer of wealth to the richest 1% will only speed up.

Overleaf are reports of meetings with Labour Candidate, Bob Blizzard and Green Candidate Graham Elliott. A vote for Bob Blizzard could be important in defeating the incumbent Tory. A vote



for Graham Elliot could be a marker to show that Labour isn't doing enough.

Our question to all the candidates at the Christ Church 'Question Time' meeting:

INEQUALITY

Inequality in Britain has reached pre-First World War levels. In five years of coalition government the number of billionaires has doubled while one in four children live below the poverty line.

Shouldn't a future government substantially increase taxes on the richest rather than imposing more cuts on the rest?

Question Time - 2015 Election

Thursday 30 April, 7.30pm

Christ Church, Whapload Road
Lowestoft, NR32 1XD

All five candidates for Waveney constituency are due to debate

www.lowestoftagainstthecuts.org.uk

ELECTION 2015: IS THERE A GREEN ALTERNATIVE?

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



Graham Elliott

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

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

lowestoftagainstthecuts@hotmail.co.uk

01502 569174 / 568684 / 574010

Elliot, spoke at our March 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, 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. In fact the Green Party has policies on the comprehensive legalisation of workers' rights and trade union autonomy as well as legal aid for workers in dispute – aid which has effectively been withdrawn by the present coalition government.

The Green Party's manifesto includes much that is out of reach but its more immediate aims demonstrate a sharper and clearer opposition to cuts than any of the three "established" parties. "Established" at the moment, that is. 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.

ELECTION 2015: LABOUR SHOULD DO BETTER

When Bob Blizzard addressed Waveney TUC he started with the party's pledges. These include reversing the Tory cut to the top rate of income tax and introducing a mansion tax; raising the minimum wage to £8 per hour by 2020; more apprenticeships; more free childcare and curbs on employment agencies.



Also promised are freezing energy bills until 2017; introducing a 10p lower rate of income tax; cutting tuition fees from £9000 to £6000pa; building 200,000 homes a year; banning "exploitative" zero hours contracts; repealing the Health and Social Care Act; employing 20,000 more nurses and more doctors, midwives and home care workers; and a higher priority for mental health services.

LCAC would not disagree with any of these promises or intentions although the Labour Party seems to be flirting with anti-immigrant policies rather than challenging the scapegoating involved. But is it too "timid" as one in the audience put it? It pledges to cut the deficit every year – but without tapping into the wealth being accumulated at the top that means continuing with cuts. The mansion tax and so on are fleas bites. Repealing the Health and Social Care Act is

fine but what about the services already privatised and the built in "efficiency savings" which are taking the NHS into crisis? Why isn't renationalising the railways down there? Or taking back the utilities which are just a licence to print money?



Bob Blizzard

Bob was in an upbeat mood and thought that Labour's programme was the most radical he had ever campaigned on – he was Waveney MP between 1997 and 2010. He has been a active campaigner on issues which have badly affected local services, often initiating campaigns against cuts and closures. LCAC worked with Bob in opposing the closure of Lowestoft Town Hall, the setting up of Beccles "Free School", the ending of adult mental health services in Waveney, the closure of Lowestoft Hospital and the mass housing building programme on the south side of Lake Lothing to the detriment of local jobs.

An ex-Labour Party whip in Parliament Bob now intends to sit on the back benches. He will vote against Trident and opposes HS2. It was surprising how many Labour Party members have reservations about the Party's policies. The success of the SNP in Scotland, which threatens to reduce the Labour Party there to a rump, shows what a more radical and determined approach can do. Labour doesn't have to support austerity.

