

THE PEOPLE'S

MANIFESTO

THE
PEOPLE'S
ASSEMBLY

AGAINST **AUSTERITY**

WE'RE NOT 'ALL IN THIS TOGETHER'

Austerity is working only for the elite. Meanwhile we have seen the sharpest decline in real wages for ordinary people since Victorian times.

The scale of the transfer of money to the rich and powerful from the rest of society, unprecedented in modern times, is combined with savage attacks on our rights to organise and fight back.

This attack means we must demand an alternative to survive and make a future for ourselves, our families and our communities.

FOR A PEOPLE'S BRITAIN, NOT A BANKERS' BRITAIN'

There is no need for ANY cuts to public spending; no need to decimate public services, no need for unemployment or pay and pension cuts; no need for "Austerity" and privatisation. There IS an alternative.



GET INVOLVED

Join us in a united national campaign against austerity, cuts and privatisation in our workplaces, community and welfare services.

Attend our National Demo on Saturday, 20 June, assemble 12pm, Bank of England (Queen Victoria Street) City of London

Help promote the People's Charter and Petition on which this Manifesto is based and to challenge and encourage all election candidates to say exactly where they stand in relation to this Manifesto.

CONTACT THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

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THE CENTRAL QUESTION IS:

If elected will you consistently oppose ALL austerity and privatisation proposals and legislation?

WHY IS THIS SO VITAL?

Ordinary citizens, working people, are under deliberate and determined attack from the richest and most powerful class of people in the country. The elite want to destroy all the advances working people have won over the last 60 years in terms of public services and the welfare state. They want to slash state spending, and to privatise the remaining, potentially profitable, services for their big business friends to make even more money.

NO ALTERNATIVE?

What's more, the elite want us to believe that there is no alternative. They are using their Tory-led ConDem Coalition government to spread this lie. Amid the even more ridiculous idea that in the face of a fictitious national emergency, a banking crash caused by them, "we" – working people, millionaire politicians, fat-cat bankers and tax-avoiding business men – "are all in this together".

UNPAID TAX AND UNTOLD RICHES

The truth is that the top 10% of the population own over 70% of all the wealth. This has been largely made for them by the workers they employ, or in money speculation or from interest on credit. Their total wealth has more than doubled in the years of the recession.

The government's own figures show that this same top 10% owe £120 billion in avoided, evaded or simply unpaid tax. This is set to grow in the coming year by around £70 billion.

AUSTERITY IS THE TOOL THEY HAVE INVENTED TO BEAT US WITH

As well as the massive job losses created by Government cuts in the whole range of public services - Education, Health, Local and National Government and Administration - thousands and thousands of jobs have been and continue to be destroyed in the private sector of British manufacturing and supporting industries like transport.

Both public and private sector real jobs are 'replaced' by enforced 'self-employment' with all its uncertainties and risk; increasing numbers of part time jobs, precarious working hours, including flexible working, zero hours contracts and 'here today gone tomorrow' employment. The real message behind the creation of this 'flexible workforce' is 'Do as you are told, when you are told, or you're out.'

False enemies and false solutions are peddled in the corporate media by the rich and powerful, intent on creating diversions and setting worker against worker. This can be seen in the rise of racism, islamaphobia, homophobia and fascism leading to the demonisation of migrants and the poor. Under attack from austerity we need to be clear who the culprits are who benefit.

British big business exports more capital abroad than it invests at home. This was true before the financial and economic crisis and it's true now.

The international financiers call this "globalisation" – but it is really just a continual search for the cheapest labour, the cheapest raw material, lowest levels of environmental law, worst labour protection and lowest taxes.

Why? Because the elite seek to make as much profit as possible regardless of the long-term consequences to people, communities and the environment. This international race to the bottom in search of the best profit and the quickest buck depends on national and regional governments, like the European Union, pursuing austerity to allow big business to move in and out at will, to take advantage of a low wage, low skill and unorganised workforce desperate for work.

Ireland, Greece, Spain and Portugal lead the way – with the European Central Bank demanding reductions in living standards and savage reductions in public spending. It means putting workers out of work here in Britain, while importing and super-exploiting large numbers of young workers from abroad to undercut wages, at the same time further wrecking the environment.

It supports the myth that there is no point voting because national parliaments can't stand up to the EU and the IMF. Austerity is not necessary; we can have a strong economy if we choose to.



WHO GAINS FROM AUSTERITY?

- 1** The Chief Executives of the Financial Times top 100 companies took an average 55% pay increase since the ConDems came to power.
- 2** The bank and finance industry made an annual profit of £90 billion profit and paid around £7 billion in bonuses on top of their already huge salaries.
- 3** In 1998 bosses received 45 times the average pay. They now pay themselves 185 times the average pay.
- 4** The wealth of the 1,000 richest people has doubled since the recession started
- 5** Corporation tax has been cut by 14% since 2010
- 6** The bankers have received massive subsidies through 'Quantitative Easing', costing us £375 billion
- 7** Rather than taxing the wealthy to balance the economy, the government has borrowed over £430 billion in 4 years, more than Labour did in the previous 13 years.
- 8** HM Revenue and Customs estimates that it fails to collect £35 billion in tax every year, £8.8 billion from big businesses.
- 9** £100 billion in tax is lost through 'legal' avoidance and 'illegal' evasion.
- 10** Vodafone owes £6 billion in unpaid taxes.
- 11** Boots, which earns billions of pounds from the tax funded NHS, has relocated to Switzerland and avoided paying £1.1 billion in tax.
- 12** Amazon earned £4.2 billion but paid just £3.2 million in tax.
- 13** Starbucks paid no corporation tax on £400 million of sales and Google UK paid £6 million tax on £395 million of sales.

AND WHO PAYS?

- 1** Average pay has fallen every year for six years. This is the worst decline in living standards since records began in 1856.
- 2** Only 1 in 40 new jobs is a proper full time employment. Most new jobs are fake self employment without enough work to pay the bills, or they are in part time or temporary jobs or zero hours contracts.
- 3** Today one in five people earn less than the living wage, with more people in work below the poverty line than the number of people unemployed.
- 4** The least well off 50% of the population own between 1% and 2% of the country's wealth, a figure that has halved in recent years.
- 5** The use of food banks has exploded with over a million people using them to put a meagre meal on the table.
- 6** Zero hours contracts and free internships take us back to the days of the dockers' hiring pen and Victorian apprenticeships.
- 7** There are still more than 2 million workers unemployed, representing over 6% of the workforce.
- 8** Youth unemployment is running at 18.5%, with many young people forced to face unfair sanctions and benefit suspensions.
- 9** There has been a massive growth in payday loan shark companies, with annual interest rates of between 4,000% and 6,000%.
- 10** Government investment has been slashed from 3.5% of GDP to 1.5%.
- 11** There are another 60% of cuts yet to come. 40% of Britons will lose out in tax and benefit changes.
- 12** The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development estimate that 725,000 public sector jobs will be lost in by 2016

INCREASED PRIVATISATION AND THE DESTRUCTION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

As well as cutting public expenditure, the ConDem Coalition is using the fallout from the banking crisis to accelerate the privatisation programme, taking money from the public purse and giving it in the form of juicy, profitable contract to their friends in the city.

We have seen the money for public services (our money) cut by the government and skimmed off as profit by big business. We need a new commitment to public services for the people - not for profit.

The NHS has been attacked through fragmentation and privatization for years. Expensive PFI schemes burden trusts with debt for decades, paying big profits to big business and reducing the money for care.

The Health and Social Care Act has made hospitals and health centres operate as private businesses in competition with each other for skilled staff and essential resources.

There has been an increasing use of expensive “agencies” to provide exploited hospital workers on worse conditions often enticed from poor countries that need their skills.

The so-called “right” to choose private hospital treatment for those “profitable” areas of treatment has robbed the NHS of the public money needed to offer the full range of treatment, while the private sector won't touch unprofitable treatments.

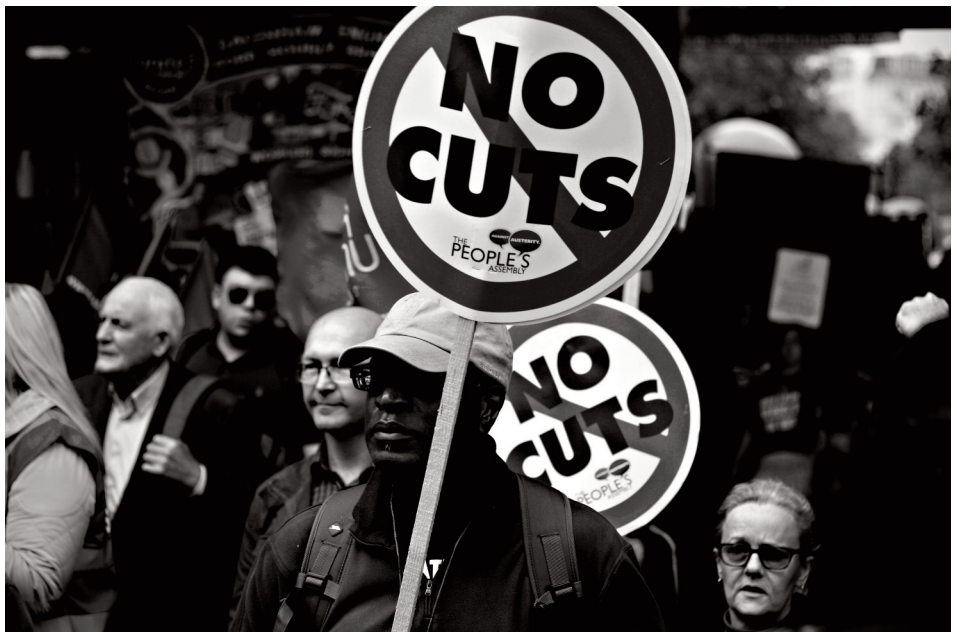
The Royal Mail had its most profitable postal services creamed off by privateers, resulting in a reduction of deliveries and the closure of rural and crown post offices. It was then given away at a knock-down price in a deal that made millions of pounds for the ConDems billionaire friends.

The Railways. The privatisation of British Rail demonstrates just how inefficient and costly things can be when run by the private sector as well as how it can line the pockets of the rich and powerful.

Public money going to railways has more than doubled since privatisation while the cost of rail fares has risen, in real terms, by 23% with fat profits for those who run the franchise.

We have the most expensive fares in Europe with the most fragmented network while in other European countries have efficient national rail services with 80% -100% run by the public sector.

When Privateers couldn't make a profit on the East Coast Mainline, they handed it back to the state where it became the most efficient and profitable segment of the railway, returning nearly a £1bn to the government since 2009. The British public sector is not allowed to bid for new franchises, and yet the majority of those bidding are in effect owned or controlled by the state: other European States.



AN EDUCATION SYSTEM OPEN FOR BUSINESS - FOR THE RIGHT PRICE

The State Education System, at all levels from nursery education to Higher Education (including Secondary, Adult, Community and Further Education) is subject to huge cuts, fragmentation and privatization.

Again, government policies cut funding while opening up the most profitable sections to their friends in big business. *Inconvenient*, democratic local authority control has been swept away through a combination of cuts, Academies and Free Schools, to be replaced by market-ready chains for the most profitable schools. The proliferation of 'education consultancies' and 'education management companies' shows that big profits are available to the educational privateers.

Huge cuts in educational support services have opened up the sector to the privatization giants of Capita, Serco and G4S, who make quick profits for poor services, letting down our children and vulnerable communities.

Sure Start provision and Children's centres have been closed to develop a market for the private sector to profit from parents desperate for childcare places in a country where we work the longest hours in Europe.

There has been a freezing of school budgets with the potential loss of 40,000 teaching jobs, according to a private memo from the DfE. Combined with savage cuts in support services the most disadvantaged and deprived as well as those with special needs are being left high and dry. Where's the big society now?

Further Education has been hit hard by the abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance preventing many young people from continuing in education beyond 16 without having to work in low pay jobs to make ends meet.

Continuing cuts in universities and colleges, combined with massive increases in fees, is putting Higher Education without facing a lifetime of debt beyond the reach of many working class young people.

The notion of 'Lifelong learning' has become a sad joke with the cuts in adult education budgets and the hiking of charges. Combined with cuts in the youth service, young people are struggling to improve themselves.

HOUSING FOR PROFIT AND NOT FOR NEED

The housing crisis is UK wide and homelessness is at an all-time high.

Recession, unemployment, poverty, the Bedroom Tax and removing Council Tax rebates is resulting in many more people losing their homes through repossession and evictions.

There is already a need for 3 million new homes, yet council house building is at an all-time low, while speculative private builders only follow the money.

Local authorities were bullied into transferring their housing stock to private housing associations and now there is increased pressure on local councils to transfer all council housing to the private sector.

Rents are rising dramatically towards commercial rates, which combined with cuts in housing benefit is forcing many working class people out of their traditional communities – the 'class cleansing' of our cities.

Building workers stand idle, families live in overcrowded homes, one in three council houses are in need of repair and waiting lists grow. Austerity cuts deep into our quality of life and the market isn't the solution.

BENEFITS AND WELFARE

Despite what the rich and powerful tell us there is such a thing as society, not just 'individuals and families'. The provision of support for those who need it are features of a healthy and integrated society. Mutual support and solidarity are the keys to wellbeing and security for all. The 'dog eat dog' neoliberal world allows the amassing of fortunes for the few, insecurity and poverty for others. We are encouraged by all 'mainstream' political parties to regard the widening wealth / poverty gap as normal and to regard foodbanks as laudable self-help and to accept payday loansharks as long as they have attractive shop fronts.

Since the welfare state was won by working people after the Second World War benefits and welfare have never been under attack as they are today, or the people who use them so demonised and vilified. The artificial and deliberately offensive divisions of 'shirkers and workers', 'strivers and skivers', 'hard working families' and the hateful 'Benefits Street' are designed both to divide and rule, to mask the true nature of the problem of poverty, and to provide the context of welfare reduction, capping and withdrawal, through the 'structural reform' of benefits. On top of the general reduction in benefits, the government introduced sanctions and benefit loss to any who fall foul of deliberately obstructive hurdles – and bully and force civil servants into enforcing them.

Many of those civil servants are themselves benefit claimants due to their low pay. In 2014 there were more 'in work' claimants than those without wages. Poverty wages, many below the statutory minimum wage, enforced part-time working, illusory 'self-employment' and 1.8 million on zero hours contracts all contribute to this growing number. Benefits for those claimants in work are simply a subsidy to allow unscrupulous employers to pay poverty wage while their profits soar. In reality the government use of citizen's taxes in this way allows employers to continue to super exploit their workers.

It is the same picture in housing, with private landlords setting inflated rents that are paid for with public money and becoming rich on citizens taxes. Rather than controlling rents at a reasonable level the government enriches the private landlords while complaining about the cost of housing benefit. The lack of public social council housing, under attack by successive governments, removes choice and security from ordinary people while allowing private landlords to corner the market and make fortunes. Controls on rents combined with a public house building programme would reverse the situation. Affordable and secure housing for all at a fraction of the price is not just possible but necessary.

A society that relies on benefits to support the victims of its economic and social relationships is one which has not yet regulated itself properly, and which tolerates and even advocates inequality as a structural necessity.

By taking steps to create new real jobs, ending the 'race to the bottom', raising the minimum wage and winning a 'living wage', enforcing equal pay, making zero hours contracts illegal, preventing unnecessary redundancies and closures many of the problems faced by current claimants would be much reduced. By regulating the housing market, controlling rents in the private sector and providing new social council housing, much more would be achieved.

Real benefits should support those who need them, and should be viewed with pride, not as an economic, social and political burden. Benefits should never be used as subsidies to exploitative employers and landlords – the real 'scroungers'. It is unemployment – however it is disguised -low pay and high housing costs that need to be legislated out of existence.

THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE

NONE of these attacks on jobs and public services, national or local, are necessary. Instead, by “confronting” the deficit caused by their £1.3 trillion bail out of the banks, the Government should introduce a radical and fair taxation policy and an economic policy designed to put the resources of Britain to work for the people, not for the tiny minority of the super rich.

TAX THE RICH

The first step must be a positive, progressive and fair taxation system that would:

- Target the £120 billion of evaded and avoided tax by the super-rich
- Close tax loopholes and tax havens, saving a further £70 billion per year
- Levy a 2% wealth tax on the richest 10% of the population, raising £78 billion a year
- Increase higher top rates of income tax on earnings above £50,000, raising £5 billion a year
- Increase corporation tax on business profits – particularly those made from overseas operations, raising £10 billion
- Gather a 20% “windfall tax” on the year’s super-profits of banking, energy, retail, arms and drugs companies, raising £16 billion this year
- Impose a “Robin Hood” tax on financial transactions, raising £20 billion a year

Pursued with determination, even without complete success in the face of certain resistance by the rich, such measures would raise well over £200 billion – more than enough to “meet the deficit” created by the combination of the banks and the chaotic “boom and slump” industrial crisis system which, together, is known as the “free market”.

Not only would these measures more than meet the deficit, they would provide the funding for a growing economy. What might such an economy look like if it was designed to meet the needs of people rather than simply maximising the profits of the already rich?

ECONOMIC POLICIES FOR A FAIRER BRITAIN - A REAL ALTERNATIVE

We need a full employment economy, protecting jobs, rebuilding industry and creating a sustainable future

We now have to demand the alternative by telling those who want our votes that we want them to implement the following actions:

- Protect our economy from international predators
- Reduce VAT to boost working people's spending power and provide economic stimulus
- Take into public ownership the banks and essential industries - energy, water, telecommunications and post, rail and bus transport - to put their strategic direction and profits to work for the British people
- Take back control of interest rates and monetary policy from the Bank of England
- Provide Government support and import tariff protection for other strategic industries
- Limit the export of investment capital to prevent the risk of asset stripping by transnationals
- Introduce legislation to prevent closures and mass redundancies in profitable industries and the "export of jobs" to super-exploited markets abroad

FAIR TREATMENT, FAIR PAY AND A PEACEFUL FUTURE

- Prevent the super exploitation of immigrant workers by unscrupulous British employers
- End job insecurity through abolishing zero hours contracts and short term contracts without specific reason
- Provide high quality vocational training for young people to meet long term employment needs, as part of a government led job creation scheme
- Make British industry re-invest a percentage of profits
- Scrap Trident and invest in an alternative use of plant and skills for peaceful purposes through a programme of Government-led Research and Development

ECONOMIC POLICIES FOR FAIRER BRITAIN - A REAL ALTERNATIVE

Build a productive economy that protects the environment and tackles climate change:

- Develop a broadly based, sustainable industrial economy with one million climate jobs by developing a rational link between research and development, investment in plant and productive capacity combined with vocational training and development
- Integrate transport and energy-conservation plans, based on publicly owned transport and energy industries, including railways, domestic airlines and municipal mass transport
- Provide greater investment in renewable energy sources, energy conservation and the recycling industries for domestic and industrial waste

A NEW INDUSTRIAL SOCIAL POLICY

- End pay freezes, and commit to free collective bargaining across industry
- Provide a commitment to the introduction of a maximum 35 hour week
- Introduce testable and enforceable equal pay
- Increase the minimum wage for all workers aged 16 and over to two thirds of the median wage
- End anti-Union laws, and introduce a statutory right to Trade Union recognition by all employers.
- Devolve powers to the Scottish and Welsh Assemblies in industrial and economic interventions

REBUILDING PUBLIC SERVICES - MEETING NEEDS NOT CHASING PROFITS

We know only too well about the scale and effects of the savage cuts under the current government. The case for an alternative economy, based on meeting the needs of the many and not making profits for the few has been made.

We know there is an alternative, however many times we are told there isn't. We know the state of our economy is not due to the actions of other workers, either at home and abroad, but the actions of bankers and big business desperate to take profits regardless of the consequences to working people and those consigned to poverty through unemployment. We know that Austerity is a tool used to beat working people across Europe and the world while pretending that we're all in it together.

DEMAND THE ALTERNATIVE

We now have to demand the alternative by telling those who want our votes that we want them to promise implement the following actions:

- End all fragmentation, competition and market models within public services
- Stop union-busting, victimization of union reps, and restore collective bargaining within public services
- End all forms of privatisation and profit taking from public services
- Restore the integrated management of the National Health Service, under democratic control, with cooperation rather than competition as the ethos of the NHS.
- Restore the role of democratically elected and accountable Local Education Authorities in managing all publicly funded education in their area – managing the systematic delivery of education services to all, from pre-school to Further Education, to deliver equality of opportunity.
- Abolish student fees, and the reinstatement of the Student Grant – recognising that Higher Education is essential not just to the individual but to the future of Britain, and worthy of investment
- Provide statutory funding for the youth service and adult/community education
- End housing repossession evictions brought about by the effects of the recession, and establish rent controls in the private sector
- Introduce a comprehensive programme to increase socially affordable housing, and end all council house sales. Renew investment in council house building and repairs, with an end to housing stock transfers to the private sector, in recognition of the need for 3 million new homes.
- Re-nationalise the Royal Mail, with sole control of postal services, and end the post office closure programme.
- Take into public ownership the rail and bus services.

THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY

The People's Assembly is a broad united national campaign against austerity, cuts and privatisation in our workplaces, community and welfare services, based on general agreement with the signatories' Founding Statement.

It is linked to no political party, committed to open non-sectarian working and dedicated to supplementing, rather than supplanting, trade union, student, pensioner and community opposition to austerity measures.

It is based on affiliation by individual supporters, unions nationally and locally, anti-cuts campaigns, and other student, pensioner, unemployed, disabled people's, women's, Black people's, youth and LGBT campaigning organisations.

It aspires to support, encourage, coordinate joint action, and facilitate a transfer of experience rather than to command.

The People's Assembly encourages the establishment of new local campaigns and/or People's Assemblies.

It organises newsletters, a website, twitter, Facebook and social media, meetings, conferences, lobbies, rallies, marches, demonstrations and other events.

It vehemently opposes all proposals to "solve" the crisis by discrimination or scapegoating on grounds of disability, race, religion, ethnic origin, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation or identity.

The People's Assembly liaises closely with similar movements in other countries resisting austerity measures.

It encourages a wide debate on how to protect the welfare state and develop an alternative programme for economic and social recovery.

The People's Charter



The People's Assembly national conference on 15 March 2014 unanimously voted to endorse and adopt the following aims put forward by the People's Charter:

- 1 A fairer economy for a fairer Britain
- 2 More and better jobs
- 3 High standard homes for all
- 4 Protect and improve public services
- 5 For fairness and justice
- 6 For a secure and sustainable future

You can download The People's Charter at
http://www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk/the_people_s_charter

CONTACT THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY:

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After the General Election tell the new government...

END AUSTERITY NOW

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION

Saturday 20 June 2015

Assemble 12pm

Bank of England (Queen Victoria St) City of London

Nearest tube: Bank

Organised by The People's Assembly

WWW.THEPEOPLESASSEMBLY.ORG.UK



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10 MYTHS

ABOUT

AUSTERITY

1 Austerity has worked. **TRUTH** - Austerity was meant to reduce the deficit – the gap between the government's spending, and what it gets from taxes. In fact, the deficit has grown 10% in the last year to over £100bn.

2 The British economy is stronger than other big economies. **TRUTH** - The majority of developed countries have grown faster than the UK since 2010.

3 We are creating jobs and prosperity for all. **TRUTH** - Average pay, taking account of rising prices, has fallen every year for six years. This is the worst decline living in standards for most people since official records began in 1856.

4 We are all in it together. **TRUTH** - While most of us have seen falling pay year after year, the wealth of the richest 1,000 people in Britain has doubled since the financial crash.

5 We are rebalancing the economy by creating jobs outside of financial services. **TRUTH** - Only 1 out of all 40 new jobs is proper full-time employment. Most new jobs are forms of fake self-employment without enough work to pay the bills, part-time or temp jobs, or zero hours contracts.

6 Austerity has reduced the government's debt. **TRUTH** - Because austerity has failed, this government has borrowed more in 4 years (over £430bn) than Labour did in 13 (£429bn).

7 The NHS has been ring-fenced. **TRUTH** - NHS spending has been capped. It has not kept pace with inflation and a growing population, and therefore is falling in real terms. That's why waiting lists are rising.

8 The government has invested in future growth. **TRUTH** - Government investment has been slashed from 3.5% of GDP to 1.5%.

9 We must curb benefits to stop benefit tourism. **TRUTH** - Britain has the lowest wages in Northern Europe, and one of the lowest levels of immigration. Recent migrants contributed £20bn more in taxes than they took in public services over the last decade.

10 We must stick to the course. **TRUTH** - Austerity has lowered living standards, cut public services and not reduced the deficit. More of the same will produce the same result.

DON'T BUY THE AUSTERITY LIES!