

We're not an arm of the state (or the private sector) – we have our own arms

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2012 bad; 2013 worse.....

George Osborne has just delivered his Autumn Statement. Is anybody surprised by the outcome? Despite the government spin machine repeating the mendacity of the slogan 'we're all in it together', independent analysts were quick to point out that the axe will fall on those least able to survive it. Osborne's claim that disabled people would be exempt is flatly contradicted by evidence showing that half a million disabled people will be hit by these further cuts. Even the Treasury's own distributional analysis shows how regressive this statement is - everyone loses money, but the bottom 30% will lose *double* what the top 30% do. Meanwhile, more than half local authorities asked said they were disproportionately cutting voluntary groups, despite Eric Pickles telling them they shouldn't (you had to be wet behind the ears to believe that one anyway) and everywhere in the public sector massive corporate firms are hoovering up our vital services and, to their shame, hundreds of voluntary agencies are helping them do it.

'Keep on keeping on' - that immortal line from Bob Dylan's Tangled Up in Blue - is an expression we use a lot over here at NCIA and it just about sums up where we are, as the awful 2012 draws to a close. We may be a pinprick in the side of the colluders and brown nosers of the voluntary sector establishment but we will do our best to keep sticking the pin in. Signs of greater opposition are indeed beginning to show so, as 2013 approaches, take a deep breath, remember you're not on you own and keep on keeping on.

News from the Coalition

The 'letter'!

What started life as last month's 'that takes the biscuit' award - the supine letter from 14 sector leaders 'delivering' us all to help the government out - turned into a major piece of work for us. We decided to refute the views expressed in an open letter of our own signed by 28 academics, activists and service providing voluntary groups. Mainstream media attention was zilch, not of interest apparently, but the letter has stimulated a lot of traffic within the social media. This includes an interesting and thoughtful piece from Les Huckfield, documenting how the truth of our assertion that these national bodies suck up to government can be demonstrated in relation to social enterprise policy - have a look at this - <http://bit.ly/U0uFdV>.

More evidence of our claim also came this week with the publication of NCVO's '*Open Public Services: experiences from the voluntary sector*' (<http://bit.ly/Tk0Eo9>), an upbeat and self-congratulatory celebration of outsourcing.

You can sign our letter yourself here - <http://bit.ly/12rgbXu> though the tally now stands at a somewhat pathetic 102, so go on, click on the button now. You can also join a discussion about the issues on the NatCAN site here - <http://nationalcan.ning.com/forum/topics/not-in-our-name>

Our Inquiry into Local Activism and Dissent

Over the summer and early autumn of 2012, Penny Waterhouse from NCIA gathered information about activism springing up locally and about the different models of radical support for this action. The results are encouraging: Active Dissent is alive and well - and sometimes works! A summary paper of the Inquiry is available - you can get hold of it [on this page of our website](#), where you can also see what our Planning Group on the 30th November made of it. Penny is now finishing off the full write up of this piece of work and that will be available in the New Year. A lively discussion has also sprung up about the issues on the NatCAN site and you can join in here - <http://bit.ly/UhrtbZ> - if you're minded to.

What the Lottery has in mind for us all

The Big Lottery Fund has been progressively extending its influence over the pattern of local voluntary sector activity, using its funding clout to shift assumptions and reshape the way the sector operates. In an important new paper, '*Building Capabilities: BIG's map of our future*', Adrian Barritt from Adur Voluntary Action casts a critical eye over these manoeuvres. You can access this must-read here - <http://bit.ly/Z7PSrI>

Events coming up

Tell Capita they are not wanted in Barnet – 20th December

Barnet Alliance for Public Services are taking their protest to Capita's HQ in London. Meet Thursday 20 December at 5 pm, outside Capita Plc HQ, 71 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0XA

“Megacity London- ever growing, ever more unequal” – 15th January

The Sheila McKechnie Foundation is running a special meeting “aimed at campaigners, lobbyists, policymakers and strategists who are trying to tackle poverty and inequality in the capital.” Speaking at the meeting will be Professor Danny Dorling and Dr Ben Hennig.

The meeting will be held at the Resource for London, Tuesday 15th January between 4.30 - 6.30pm. Tickets cost from £10 but there are some free tickets for those short of dosh. Book a place here - <http://bit.ly/12f6HiM>

Social Work Action Network (SWAN) - 8th National Conference - 12th & 13th April 2013

This conference is entitled: “*Defeating the politics of austerity: Creating an alternative future*”. It will take place in London at the South Bank University. It will cost you to attend. Further details from <http://to.ly/gmeL>

The evidence builds....

New report on the cuts slams Government policies

The think tank nef have been looking into the impact of the cuts on people and communities in London and Birmingham. A previous report - ‘*The new Austerity and the Big Society*’ highlighted, amongst other things, the effects on voluntary sector agencies, highlighting increased demand, shrinking resources, loss of professional staff, more pressure on those remaining, increasing use of volunteers, increased reliance on short term contracts and losing funding to predatory private sector firms and large charities, who focus “first and foremost on their profit margins and promising little of the social value provided by their predecessors.” Pretty well told us what we already know but with conclusions that were a mighty disappointment - ‘start with existing assets and capabilities’; ‘value collaboration over competition’; and ‘provide training and capacity building’. I think we need a bit more than that to beat the evil empire.... (see - <http://bit.ly/Z7Q3D1>)

Now nef has now published another report from the same project - ‘*Everyday insecurity: Life at the end of the welfare state*’. This documents the “... unsustainable human, social and economic costs” of the government’s policies where “the burden of reducing Britain’s deficit is falling predominantly on people who get vital support from public services and welfare: the unemployed, low-income earners, the very elderly and the young, and - perhaps most of all - disabled people.”

This report can be downloaded here - <http://bit.ly/SY5ho1>. The report also spawned a powerful Guardian article on breadline Britain and you can see that here - <http://bit.ly/Uv53mM>.

Two depressing reports from frozen Newcastle

Newcastle CVS has produced two reports about the impact of the current austerity on people living in Newcastle. The first - *'Frozen in the headlights: being poor in Newcastle'* highlights the situation of Newcastle residents and what local community and voluntary organisations are doing to try to alleviate their situation. The second - *'Food for thought: food bank provision in Newcastle'* documents the growing number of food banks and 'no cost' food in Newcastle. Both reports were written before the City Council announced £90million of cuts over the next three years.

The reports can be downloaded here - <http://bit.ly/UHM9dx>; and here - <http://bit.ly/U0vnYz>.

Sign up for Equality Trust newsletter

If you don't already know it, the Equality Trust issues a quarterly campaign update - *Among Equals*. You can have a peep here - <http://bit.ly/UPbZdw> or have a look at their website - www.equalitytrust.org.uk

Two reports from TSRC challenge government mantras

The Third Sector Research Centre has put out two reports both of which refute government assertions about voluntary groups and the Big Society. The first examines the push for partnership working and scaling up of third sector organisations and finds that both service commissioning and partnerships have been driven by a fixation with economies of scale. But this has "limited purchase in the delivery of public services, where personal relationships are often more important than systems in delivering outcomes for users." The report found the "benefits of partnerships were sometimes limited and hard to generalise;" identified that 'economies of scope' should be seen alongside economies of scale; and that "service user voices were often silent in current partnerships."

The second report looked at the position of smaller community organisations as part of the TSRC's 'Below the Radar' programme. Findings here challenge two key assumptions on which the 'Big Society', Localism and Open Public Services is predicated. Firstly, that community groups will 'scale up' to take on public services. At this point in time, the research found no evidence of their desire to take on public service delivery. Rather they were motivated by local interests in the issues directly affecting their community: offering services for and with the public - but not public services.

The second assumption is that an ever expandable number of volunteers and active citizens will fill the gaps left by public service cuts. The evidence suggests there is a civic core, rather than an inexhaustible number, of activists. Some below the radar groups were struggling to maintain existing members, let alone recruit new volunteers.

These reports are here - <http://bit.ly/Xq0MCe> and here - <http://bit.ly/U0vBip>

Managing Democracy, Managing Dissent

Is the title of a forthcoming book from Corporate Watch. This is a collection of nineteen essays, from a range of contributors, detailing some of the ways in which 'democracy' today limits popular participation, manipulates public opinion, and co-opts or represses political dissent in order to protect capitalism from real and potential clamour for change. It will be available on the Corporate Watch website and in bookshops soon - priced £8.00.

<http://www.corporatewatch.org>

Barings Independence Panel gets told the same story again

The Barings Panel heard another dose of evidence on the independence issue on the 3rd October and yet again got an NCIA account of the state of the sector, this time from Clive Martin, Director of criminal justice charity CLINKS. Charities in his part of the world, said Clive, have been contracted into not biting the hand that feeds them; have stopped speaking out and campaigning on criminal justice issues; smaller groups without contracts are being shafted; the big prime contracts are going to the private sector leaving junior partner sub-contracting as the crumbs for charities. Sadly, Clive's only answer was to plead for money to pay infrastructure groups like his own, to ensure the "voice and advocacy" for the sector continues. Dream on Clive.

You can see a summary of this evidence together with lack lustre contributions from NCVO and ACEVO here - <http://bit.ly/RvjhII>

Heros, heroines, & keeping on keeping on

The new 'Agreement of the People' starts its long march

An animated meeting on November 17th called by World to Win and a number of other groups debated the merits of a campaign to establish an 'Agreement of the People' (In 1647, during the English Revolution, the Levellers set out an Agreement of the People because relations between the people, parliament and the monarchy had broken down.). Those of us there felt that there could be a lot of potential in such an initiative, especially to provide a mechanism to draw together under one banner, the thousands of people who are fighting for social justice in their own corners. A steering group has been set up. If you want to know more, including joining the steering group, then have a look here - <http://bit.ly/Zu7iOf>. More information from Corinna (corinna.lotz@btinternet.com) or Claudine (ntha_lets@yahoo.co.uk).

On the subject of planning.....

Planning Network UK (PNUK) has drafted a manifesto for planning and land reform. In their introduction they say: "Our thinking is underpinned by a series of key principles that show how planning can make a progressive contribution to shaping more just and sustainable places. Our proposals show how these principles can be put

into practice. They include: reforms to the land market and land ownership through taxation and common ownership of land; a rethink of property market regulation; and a more positive and democratic set of governance arrangements from the national to the local level.

Our aim is to create a much more proactive, publicly controlled system of development, releasing the grip of the land and property market over planning, and enabling delivery of the housing, infrastructure, green revolution and neighbourhood development which the country needs." You can get hold of this important document here -

<http://bit.ly/Zu7soi>.

Pressure mounts on Barnardo's over child detention involvement

Opposition to Barnardo's involvement in child detention is growing. Barnardo's runs 'family welfare services' at Cedar's Detention Centre in Pease Pottage, a facility operated by G4S on behalf of the UK Borders Agency. A day of action was held on November 8th to protest at the charity's role there and draw attention to the mental and physical harm caused to the children incarcerated there. The government promised to end the detention of children within the asylum system but has taken no steps in England and Wales to honour that promise.

Many commentators have condemned Barnardo's involvement: "providing a cloak of legitimacy to the continued detention of children" (Frances Webber, Institute of Race Relations); "they ruined the campaign to end the detention of children, which campaigners felt could be achievable as the government had already promised it." (Medical Justice); "how will Barnardo's be able to hold government to account over the way it is managing children and families facing deportation . . . when receiving government funding for their services?" (Sir Al Ainsley Green).

More information from Barnardo's Out - <https://network23.org/barnardosout/>

Comedians and musicians unite against leafleting bans

In our last newsletter we reported on the growing use by local authorities of banning certain activities in public places - including the handing out of leaflets. Although political, religious or charitable leafleting is supposed to be exempt from this provision, some local councils are disregarding this exemption - leafleteers were recently fined in Leeds, for example, where the Council took the position that 'political' meant 'party political'.

The campaign against this latest infringement of historic liberties is being coordinated by the Manifesto Club, who have now launched a petition supported by comedians and musicians, mindful of the importance of flyering to the entertainment business. You can have a look at the petition and sign up here -

<http://chn.ge/UHMKvO>.

New anti-privatisation group aims to represent the public's voice

'We Own It' is a new group established to defend public services against outsourcing and privatisation, and with the particular focus of making sure that the public's voice is heard loud and clear. As they say: "Your tax is paying for private companies to make a profit from public services. But many of these companies are doing a bad job at running your NHS, schools, railways, care homes and other services. 'Competition' isn't working, privatisation is hurting people. Would you like cheaper train fares? Better hospitals? Fairer welfare? Join the campaign for a better deal, where public services are owned by you and accountable to you. We paid for it. We own it." You can sign up here - <http://weownit.org.uk/>

Disability campaigners lobby the Labour Party

Disability campaigners have written an open letter to Liam Byrne, Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, to try and secure a parliamentary debate on the disproportionate impact of the cuts on disabled people, their carers and families. The call is for a Cumulative Impact Assessment, which will look at the full effects of the cuts on these vulnerable people. Supporters can email Byrne themselves (byrnel@parliament.uk), and forward the letter to their own MP asking for action. You can check the detail here - <http://bit.ly/UPd4Sz>

DPAC wants evidence of cuts to personal care budgets

Disabled People Against the Cuts wants to hear of examples where personal budgets are being cut. Here's a case in point:

"My local authority to 'save' money have given the Social Care budget by contract to Hestia and in the process they are trying to cut my care budget by almost 50% without any explanation or even notification! The first I heard of it was when someone from Hestia came to see me about how my 'indicative' budget could be spent and managed! And I am not an isolated case. Local Authorities, strapped for cash by central government cuts, are playing budgets and politics with disabled people's lives by cutting their care and support services!"

Please email information to Linda Burnip at linda_burnip@yahoo.co.uk

And the activists still have time to stop the traffic!

Once again disability activists made their mark as the recent TUC march wound its way around central London. This time, their direct approach to fighting government-enforced austerity was to bring Marble Arch to a standstill, as wheelchair users locked and glued their chairs in a chain to block the traffic.

You can see what DPAC are up to generally by logging on to <http://www.dpac.uk.net/>.

Unite members call for charities to leave ACEVO

A branch of Unite's voluntary sector worker members has called on the union to urge charity chief executives who are part of ACEVO to leave the organisation in protest at Stephen Bubb's involvement in "the break-up and marketisation of the NHS". Some 50 voluntary sector members of Unite from organisations including Crisis, Greenpeace and Amnesty International supported the move, and moved a motion that was passed by the National Industrial Sector Committee on October 17th. The motion has now been remitted to the National Executive Committee.

Things have not been going smoothly for Stephen lately. The government have turned down the proposition that charity trustees can be paid, which ACEVO was pushing, the Work Programme, based on a model that ACEVO approves, is in tatters, and the new Chair of the Charity Commission, William Shawcross, had the temerity to tell delegates at ACEVO's annual conference that the some charities have become dependent on the state and that "charities should not become the junior partner in the welfare state.....they must remain independent and focused on their mission."

'In Defence' revs up for next phase of the struggle

The 'In Defence of Youth Work' campaign has held two workshops on 'Where Next for the Campaign?' Key questions were debated, including:

- For workers operating in imposed and targeted settings, does IDYW come across as precious and out of touch, particularly in its emphasis on young people's right to choose to be involved?
- In criticising leading youth organisations for colluding with the Coalition's market-driven agenda, is IDYW ignoring the pragmatic pressures on a management?
- Is IDYW's critique of the National Citizen's Service stopping it recognising its possibilities?

Key future actions included:

- Organising for IDYW's national conference on March 8 in Leeds - with focuses on the *dilemmas facing the training agencies* and *measurable outcomes for youth work*.
- Initiating a new series of workshops based on the IDYW book *This is Youth Work. Stories from Practice* including an explicit effort to involve workers practising within targeted settings.
- Contributing to the founding conference of the European Open Youth Work network in Vienna in January and to Limerick Youth Service's development of its youth work role.
- As part of IDYW's alliance-building commitment, working in the Choose Youth Alliance to organise a 'The Future of Youth Work' event drawing together leading actors in the sector
- Broadening the range of contributions to and perspectives on the IDYW website.

Tune into the discussion here -

<http://www.indefenceofyouthwork.org.uk/wordpress/>

This month's 'That Takes the Biscuit' Award

G4S and SERCO

who received over half of Government's spending on contracted out detention and surveillance services

More than half Government spending on private contractors by the UK Border Agency and the National Offender Management Service during the first year of the coalition government went to just two companies G4S and SERCO, a new report from the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies reveals. The report, *UK Justice Policy Review*, shows that out of a total of £745 million spent between May 2010 and April 2011 one third went to G4S, who received £229 million. A further £154 million, one fifth of the total, went to SERCO. The contracts covered a range of services including detention, surveillance, prisoner escort and deportation. Be dismayed here: <http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/ukjpr1pressrelease.html>

The madness continues

Barnet activists occupy Cabinet chamber in protest at £750M Capita giveaway

As expected Barnet Council's Cabinet agreed on the 6th December to outsource a raft of services to Capita, despite vigorous opposition from local residents and trades unionists. Some 200 residents and staff members came to listen to the debate, but when it became clear that the councillors were going to approve the deal, they occupied the chamber. Councillors were forced to move to another room while the protestors held their own debate on their own vision for the council of the future.

The struggle will continue despite this setback and will include taking the agro to Capita itself - **Meet Thursday 20 December at 5 pm, outside Capita Plc HQ, 71 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0XA.**

And just so you know these actions are not all just negative complaining, the Barnet Alliance has produced its own alternative plan to the madness of outsourcing -the Barnet 10-point Plan. You can have a look here - <http://bit.ly/12rhc1z>.

Charity Sub-contractors cut by SERCO

Some charity subcontractors involved in the delivery of the National Citizen Service will lose a quarter of their funding next year as a result of changes to the structure of the programme. One subcontractor told *Third Sector* magazine it was paid £1,300 per place for delivering the pilot programme in 2012, but it was being offered only about £980 per place by the prime contractor SERCO - a reduction of 25 per cent -

to deliver the contract in 2013. The SERCO-led consortium, NCS Network, scooped up six of the 19 regional contracts available for 2013 and 2014. Surprise, surprise....

Government Plans for more housing – wolf in sheep’s clothing?

When Nick Boles, Minister for Planning, announced that 2 million more acres of land should be designated for housing, it caused uproar in the Daily Telegraph, the Mail and in the Tory Shires. Cameron and George Osborne backed Boles. What’s going on? Should we be siding with the Tory Shires on this one? Not quite. Our housing correspondent spells out what’s going on....

“The Boles statement echoes the refrain of the housebuilding companies that more land is needed for housing and there should be further deregulation of planning. The Shires can be seen as the NIMBYs although perhaps to their credit they don’t want to dismantle the planning system. But neither the Shires nor the house builders want to tackle the real problem - which is meeting housing need. That means not just increasing housing numbers but building affordable, decently designed housing in the right place; and regulating the out of control private rented sector.

The current system does not deliver this - and a radical reversal is not what Boles and Cameron have in mind. Their housing drive is private sector led, determined by private sector rents and prices, combined with flogging off public land to builders on the cheap. They may not be delighted with the types of houses built by Barratts and the rest but the house builders vociferously support the Tories, and the Government are not going to upset them.

We must not be seduced by the Daily Telegraph because it wants restrictions on greenfield sites. That’s not a housing policy. Nor is building on brownfield sites in the cities instead. Nothing less than a new planning and land development system from the bottom up and top down must be the demand of the community movement.”

Parliamentary group says ‘never mind the facts’ on outsourcing

With thanks to John Seddon of Vanguard Consulting for this item:

“I noted in a previous newsletter how the All Party Parliamentary Group on outsourcing and shared services is made up of IT companies, the usual private-sector suspects with a pecuniary interest in out-sourcing and members of parliament. There is not one member who expresses doubts; a completely biased group!

The Foreword of their recent report admits that public-sector outsourcing contracts have failed to be delivered on time and don’t achieve the promised savings - correct! But it then goes on to say that the report’s guiding principle is that outsourcing has an important role to play in the government’s plan for deficit reduction and can make the vital savings needed. Never mind the evidence, let’s continue with our prejudices.

From there the report amounts to a list of things ministers will ensure public-sector leaders comply with in order to be a more productive feeding ground for the private-sector parasites.

You can read it for yourself: <http://bit.ly/U2g9mK>. "

Social Enterprise UK has a moan about the big boys

Social Enterprise UK has got its knickers in a twist, presenting yet again the hoary old complaint about level playing fields - or the lack of them. Published by SEUK is a new report 'The Shadow State', which documents and bemoans the fact that "Charities and social enterprises are being squeezed out of delivering public services by a small number of large companies favoured by local and central government commissioners."

The critique is powerful and accurate - power is being concentrated in the hands of large companies that can control markets, drive down pay, operate in secrecy, and become 'too big to fail'. The solution, says the report, is to force more financial transparency from the big boys and use the about-to-arrive Public Services (Social Value) Act to give preferential treatment to social enterprise.

The report also presents some useful figures on public attitudes towards privatisation - polling for the report revealed that two thirds of UK adults believe it is unacceptable for shareholders to profit from running hospitals and health services (66%), children's homes (66%), police services (66%), and care homes for elderly and disabled people (63%).

Surely it is not so difficult to understand a) when you get into the marketisation and privatisation of public services this situation is utterly inevitable and b) the government isn't the slightest bit interested in "social enterprises and charities, which reinvest their profits into additional services". Their unswerving allegiance to big business is as clear as the nose on your face. Get real SEUK.

Here's the report so you can make your own mind up - <http://bit.ly/UkGn0U>.