

'CUTS, CO-OPTIONS AND TROJAN HORSES: VOLUNTARY GROUPS AGAINST A CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT'

HOUSE OF COMMONS ON TUESDAY 30th JUNE 2015

5.30pm - 8.30pm

Under New Labour and Coalition Governments, the role and purpose of those providing voluntary and community services has been co-opted by central and local government. Contract-based commissioning and procurement regimes have replaced grant funding, undermining the ability of voluntary groups to support the best interests of users and communities and to act in solidarity with them. At the same time we see the growing influence of private sector interests and values over citizen action and involvement, alongside active voluntary sector complicity with the privatisation of public services.

NCIA totally opposes Tory policies of the Big Society, privatisation and “social innovation”, aiming to replace or deliver public services on the cheap, and is the only national network to have consistently opposed this direction of travel. NCIA champions radical independent voluntary action as part of a wider struggle for equality, social justice, liberty, freedom from want, enfranchisement and environmental sustainability. The decline of the voluntary and third sector is well documented by NCIA in two substantial and significant reports – [Here We Stand](#) - an Inquiry into Local Activism and Dissent and [Fight or Fright](#) - an Inquiry into the Future of Voluntary Services.

The Tory Manifesto, the Queen’s Speech and some Labour leadership contenders simply promise more of the same – benefit cuts, selling social housing, “getting the voluntary sector more involved” in public service delivery, the Work Programme, scaling up social impact bonds and payment by results to attract private money and a public sector “right to mutualise”. It is important to intensify opposition to these policies, within and outside Parliament.

NCIA is holding an event at the House of Commons at 17.30 on Tuesday 30 June

2015 (Committee Room 9) hosted by John McDonnell MP to present to MPs and others an NCIA perspective on what has gone wrong with relations between the state and citizen action, the damage done to the principles and practice of voluntary action by private sector values and what is needed to put things right.

The meeting will be to present key findings from NCIA Reports above, describe the current position, discuss how voluntary sector involvement in alternative strategies to combat cuts and defend better public services might best be mobilised, and explore how broader alliances of opposition might be created.

Issues and themes to be highlighted will include:

- Voluntary sector resistance against public services privatisation
- The impact of cuts on voluntary and community organisations and the communities they serve
- The damage to independent voluntary action through commissioning and procurement approaches

- The marketisation and financialisation of voluntary action through social enterprise and social investment strategies and the legitimisation of making profit from social need
- The growing subservience of voluntary services groups to global corporations through sub-contracted supply chain relationships
- The complicity with Tory policy and failure of voluntary sector 'leadership' organisations to defend and protect their constituencies from these damaging trends

Material will be presented by speakers with deep knowledge and experience of the UK voluntary and community sector:

- **Andy Benson**, Co-Convenor NCIA
- **Maurice Wren**, Chief Executive, the Refugee Council
- **Leslie Huckfield**, Former MP, campaigning against Tory 'coops', 'mutuals', 'social enterprises'
- **Elizabeth Bayliss**, Chief Executive, Social Action for Health
- **James Lazou** – Unite the Union National Research Officer

Please let us know if you'd like to come to this event so we can be sure there are no security hassles – tell me, Andy Benson – andy@independentaction.net ; 0208 800 7509.