

Meet your new masters

The Con-Dem coalition we are told is the dawn of a "new politics". To most people it looks a lot like the old politics.

More than half (53%) of the new cabinet went to private schools, compared to 7% of the general population. The new government are from a different social class to most of us, insulated from the impacts of their policies by their personal wealth.

The new chancellor George Osborne has an estimated personal fortune of £4 million. What chance is there that he can understand what it's like to be living in a council home in Nottingham? Or on the dole? Or a destitute pensioner?

The cutbacks

The recession may have been caused by short-sighted bankers, but it is ordinary people who will have to pay.

Locally we have already seen Labour-run Nottingham City Council cutting support for disabled people, shutting libraries and moving forward the closure of Victoria Leisure Centre. Over the Trent, Tory-led Nottinghamshire County Council are closing recycling centres, selling off care homes and announcing 1,400 job losses.

Osborne's "emergency budget" brought slashes across the board, including a cut in housing benefit and an increase in VAT which will disproportionately affect poorer people. Protests were held against the cuts agenda across the country. In Nottingham trade unionists and others demonstrated in Market Square.

The fightback

Our leaders would have us believe that these cuts are inevitable, but they are deliberate policies, pursued to appease global financial markets at the expense of ordinary people. The benefits and services now being dismantled were hard won through years of struggle. We cannot allow them to be taken away without a fight.

In Greece, similar austerity measures have been greeted with protests, workplace occupations, general strikes and riots. Collective action remains a powerful tool to defend our interests.

This can begin from the smallest actions: talk to the people around you, your friends, neighbours and colleagues; if you're in work, join a trade union and get involved; or start your own campaign group and call a protest (remember to invite us). Individually we can be picked off, but together we can start to fight back.



Nottinghamshire says No to Nazis

In spite of a massive push to get elected, including fielding a record number of candidates, the fascist British National Party (BNP) failed to get even close to getting an MP. They also lost many of their councillors including all 12 in Barking & Dagenham. There's no getting round it - people have seen the BNP's politics and they are not impressed.

In Nottinghamshire, they fielded candidates in 7 out of 11 constituencies. It is clear that the party were really having to scrape the barrel when looking for local members to stand - Rachel Hill (Mansfield) and James North (Sherwood) were bussed in from Melton and Mike Shore (who is alleged to have been a leading figure in the Midlands Ku Klux Klan) came all the way from Hinckley in Leicestershire to stand in Broxtowe.

Most candidates didn't bother, or were too ashamed, to run proper campaigns. Shore's, Stephen Adcock's (Gedling) and Tony Woodward's (Nottingham South) names only became known when the official lists of candidates were published, just a few weeks before election day. It's no surprise that they all did very badly.

Even where the candidates were local and announced their campaigns well in advance, the racist and authoritarian politics of the BNP were not widely endorsed. Edward Holmes (Ashfield) and Simon AKA Bob Brindley (Nottingham North) only scraped 5.8% and 5.7% of the votes. These results won't bring the party much joy and we hope will make them realise that they are not wanted in this area.

In recent years, the BNP have tried to present themselves as 'respectable,' dressing up in suits and rosettes and insisting that they're not racist and only want to fight for 'traditional values'. In truth, the core of the party is made up of Holocaust deniers and racist thugs. BNP member, Robert Cottage, was recently jailed for hoarding the largest stash of explosives ever found in the UK, for use in a 'race war'. During the general election campaign, candidate Bob Bailey was caught on camera attacking Asian youths in Romford.

The BNP like to present themselves as an alternative to the mainstream political parties but they back the bosses just as strongly as Labour or the Tories. Their constitution is written so that Führer Nick Griffin rules absolutely, and many in the party claim that he is creaming off money from the BNP's finances. Certainly several of their most recent treasurers have resigned in disgust reporting that they were ordered to shred incriminating documents. The party staggers from split to split and most of their councillors are quickly booted out for being useless.

Unfortunately, given the fascist nature of the party's leadership, any power the BNP can get is a threat. They currently have two councillors in Heanor and are seeking to build a base in the East Midlands. We need strong, autonomous communities to take back control from the racists and the other parties who have deserted them. The BNP's fascist politics must be resisted wherever it surfaces.

Save Big House

The Big House provides families in north Nottinghamshire with children who have learning difficulties and challenging behaviour with short breaks for 1 to 2 nights. Campaigners fear that the Council intends to close the centre, depriving families of much needed respite.

A condition survey stated that it would cost £1.1. million to carry out repairs, but a closer look at the figures reveals that the only building used by the service will only cost £181,000. The other £966,000 relates to an unused building on the site which contains asbestos.

With the nearest comparable alternative more than 40 miles away, many parents fear they will have no choice to put their children into residential full-time care.

Campaigners have collected 5,400 signatures on a petition against the closure which was presented to the council after a demonstration outside County Hall on 20th May. They are hopeful that they may still be able to sway the council's decision.

As the government's cuts agenda begins to bite, we can expect similar campaigns to become increasingly necessary.



What's up with Notts police?

In April, chief constable of Nottinghamshire police Julia Hodson launched 'Operation Arrow,' described as 'relentless 90-day blitz on crime, to cut domestic burglaries, robberies and assaults and increase the force's clear-up rate.

Maybe the police are feeling the need to make such humdrum announcements because they are better known for malpractice than for 'clearing-up'. The number of recent cases referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) suggest that Notts police tend to be more of a danger than a service to the people of Nottingham.

The most famous case of Notts police brutality was documented in video footage posted on the internet last June, which showed four police officers punching and repeatedly tasering a man lying prone on the ground, whom they were arresting in the city centre. The video, which was given to Trent FM and then put on YouTube, caused widespread shock and anger.

Another officer is alleged to have punched a member of the public, while in a third case a suspect was run over by a police van after he fled his vehicle, apparently during a chase. A further Notts police officer admitted to 11 charges of indecent assault against children last May.

Meanwhile a woman was stabbed by her estranged husband in front of their nine-year-old son, despite having told Notts police that she feared for her safety only hours before.

To add to these woes, the Notts police dog handler who let his dogs die in a hot car is back at work after a minor slap on the wrist from the courts, and Chief Inspector Kim Molloy has been caught shoplifting lipstick in a Tesco Metro.

Police misconduct often goes unreported, because the victims are afraid of the police's powers and the police often close ranks to protect perpetrators. Even if a case against the police is taken seriously, the IPCC is notorious for letting officers off the hook and handing out lenient punishments. For example, the IPCC found no evidence of police wrongdoing in the above case of officers tasering a man lying on the ground.

At the root of all this is the fact that brutalising members of the public is normal policing activity. Policing has little to do with 'administering justice': instead, the police's job is to wield power over other people. They aren't there to serve the community, they're there to harass it. As the former head of Derbyshire Special Branch explained to a taxi driver after refusing to pay his fare: 'I am a police officer and I am going to do you.'

Peoples Histreh of Nottingham

Part 2: Reform Riots (1831)

New deputy prime minister Nick Clegg has described the ConDem government's plans to reform politics as "The biggest shakeup of our democracy since 1832, when the Great Reform Act redrew the boundaries of British democracy."

The choice of the Reform Act as a model is interesting. The Reform Act was a bill that fobbed off the masses of disenfranchised people who had been calling – with petitions, demonstrations and riots – for the vote to be extended to all people and not just the rich. Whilst the Reform Act did extend the vote to better-off middle class men (about 7% of the adult population), it left less well-off working class men – and all women – without a vote. The rest of us would have to wait until the 20th century.

The Reform Act was the third attempt at an Act to extend voting to be considered by Parliament. The Second Reform Bill had been defeated in the House of Lords in the year previous. As the news of the bill's failure spread across Britain, there were riots in several towns and cities, including London, Derby, Bristol, Worcester and Bath.

Nottingham had vehemently supported Parliamentary reform since the 1780s. In March 1831, following a public meeting in the town, more than 9,000 people signed a petition in favour of reform. When news of the voting bill's defeat in the House of Lords reached the

Rioters attacked a number of buildings owned by the rich including Colwick Hall and a silk mill in Beeston. Infamously, Nottingham Castle, owned by the hated Duke of Newcastle, was invaded and burned to the ground. Crowds attempted to do the same with Wollaton Hall the next day, but were repulsed with cavalry charges and gunfire.

Three people would later be hanged for the burning of the silk mill, other prisoners jailed and deported. The message of the riots, both here and elsewhere, was not lost on the powers that be. The Third Reform Bill was passed into law the next summer with minimal parliamentary opposition.

It is however an entry in the Duke of Newcastle's diary that sums up the the 1832 Reform Act, a history which is – in part – about to repeat itself. He wrote of the 'greatly insensed' middle classes 'who gained nothing' by the Reform Bill and of a worker who told him that 'both parties were alike' ('both' meaning Liberals and Tories at the time). Newcastle wrote deeply concerned that 'They Say now that nothing but revolution can Set them right.' This was true for the disenfranchised 170 years ago, and is true now.

As it happened with the 1832 reform, however the ConDem plans for reform will turn out, people's hopes for democratic change will be in vain now as they were then, and the government will act in favour of the rich and against the poor. But this time it's unlikely that we'll get to burn down a castle!

Shut down H&K

Nottingham's problems with guns are well known. What is less well known is that the city is home to a major multinational company that sells guns. An anonymous warehouse on an industrial estate in Lenton is the UK

headquarters of Heckler & Koch (H&K), the world's largest manufacturer of small arms: second-handguns, assault rifles, submachine guns, machine guns and grenade launchers.

Outraged by the presence of this company in our city, a group of Nottingham residents have established a campaign to shut down H&K. Since 2008, the campaign has held monthly demonstrations outside Heckler & Koch's office at Unit 3, Easter Park, Lenton Lane NG7 2PX.

In February this year a group of campaigners blockaded the entrance to the company's premises and unfurled anti-arms trade banners on its roof. At a trial relating to the action, H&K Managing Director Mike Thornton appeared as a witness. He refused to discuss whether weapons were manufactured on site but

claimed to have felt vulnerable and intimidated by the campaigners: "It is not know if they were armed with any type of missiles" said the man with a warehouse full of guns!



Small arms are the true weapons of mass destruction. Half a million people are killed by small arms each year, three quarters of whom are civilians. Millions more have to flee their homes due to small arms warfare. Literally millions of H&K small arms are in use in over 90 countries.

75% of the world's small arms end up in the hands of gangs, prompting the police to engage in a brutal escalation of violence to ensure their continued dominance. In a city that has such problems with guns, it is obscene that a company in our city is making a profit from this arms race.

Web: shutdownhk.org.uk

Indy Shorts

Online

Nottingham Credit Union is a community savings and loan service. Like a bank, they help their members save and lend their members money, but unlike a bank, they don't make a profit. Nottingham Credit Union, 69 Maid Marian Way, Nottingham, NG1 6AJ. Web: nottinghamcu.co.uk Phone: (0115) 8283121 Freephone: 0800 0937090

Skills Exchange is a local time bank: for every hour that you help someone else you will receive one time credit, which you can swap when you want something doing for you. Skills Exchange is free to all those who live, work or volunteer in Hyson Green, Radford, Forest Fields, New Basford, Sherwood Rise, Arboretum, Lenton and the Park. The Partnership Council, Unit C, Tennyson, Forest Road West, Radford, Nottingham, NG7 4EP. Web: skills2exchange.wordpress.com.

Transition Nottingham is a community-led response to peak oil and climate change. They organise an occasional market in Sneinton promoting locally grown food. Local groups around the city. Web: transitionnottingham.org.uk

Notts Alternative Mental Health Project is a group who hold informal meet ups roughly every month. The group aims to create an environment where people are able to talk openly about perspectives on mental health, often highlighting problems with the current medical model approach to mental health treatment, and also the links between psychological well-being and an often isolating and individualistic society. Email nottsmentalhealthproject@lists.aktivix.org

Forest Fields Social Club is open every Thursday, Friday, Saturday: 7.30pm to 11pm. Why not join us for a drink? Thursday is kids & family-friendly only, but membership is easy to obtain and guests are welcome. Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone St, NG7 6HX.

Veggies: Community Print Resources are the lovely people who print the Independent for us. They run a collectively managed print workshop and resource centre for Nottingham campaign community. Web: veggies.org.uk/cpr



Notts Independent is a regular newsletter. If you'd like to receive future copies please get in touch.

The Independent is produced by the Nottingham Indymedia collective. Notts Indymedia is a local non-corporate news website, where you can contribute your own news stories.

We'd like the Independent to be the same, so if you'd like to write anything for the next edition, get in touch, or just send us your article. You can also get involved with editing, producing or distributing the final result.

The people involved in the Independent are also interested in taking action on the issues we write about. We'd like to know what you think is important and work with you to make our city better.

notts.indymedia.org.uk



notts@indymedia.org

Notts Indymedia c/o Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone St., Nottingham NG7 6HX

alanadale.wordpress.com
News, views and musings
from our great city

climateactionnetworknotts.ning.com

Coalition of groups working
to combat climate change

digitaljournalist.eu
Local photographer

myspace.com/nottinghamanimalrights
Co-ordinate activities
campaigning for animal welfare
and animal rights in and
around Nottingham

nccilols.blogspot.com
Keeping an eye on
Nottingham City Council and
its friends

nottinghamcnd.org.uk
Local group opposing nuclear
weapons

nottinghamhuntsabs.weebly.com
Use non-violent direct action
to stop illegal blood sports in
and around the East Midlands

nottinghamwomenscentre.com
City-wide community centre
run by women, for
women

nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk
Supports refugees in Notts

ndvf.org.uk
Working to end domestic
violence

pedals.org.uk
Local pro-cycling campaign
questionmarc.co.uk
Nottingham-based graffiti
artist

sumac.org.uk
Nottingham's independent
community and social centre

tecspy.com/nlug
Local group for fans of
free/open source software

thesparrowsnest.org.uk
Anarchist library in St Ann's