

# Poverty and Social Inequality in the U.K.: British Government Targets Low Income Families and Young People

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The recent Conservative Party Conference in Manchester has seen the Tories putting forward harmful proposals targeting lower income families and young people. It is a continuation of aggression against the average Briton that began as soon as the ruling coalition of the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats came to power, with such notorious policies such as the Bedroom Tax, the tripling of tuition fees, and the abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance.

Disabled and mentally ill people are subjected to humiliating evaluations by Atos, the government contractor who is tasked, it seems, with getting people off welfare by any means possible. Suicides have skyrocketed as a result, as people who can barely survive as it is are told they are able to work, and have their financial support stopped.

The Tory leadership, however, seem to think that they need to do more to make the lives of the working class in Britain harder. After many months of a steady demonization campaign in the right wing media portraying those struggling to find work and/or receiving financial aid from the state as parasites bleeding Britain dry, the Conservatives clearly felt it was time to really put the boot in, claiming a desire to tackle the alleged 'something for nothing' culture that all poor people apparently subscribe to. No mention, of course, of the 'something for nothing' culture that the Tory Party's friends in the banking sector have enjoyed.

Those under the age of twenty-five will no longer be entitled to Jobseekers Allowance and Housing Benefit should the Conservatives win the 2015 General Election, according to David Cameron. Such policies will be disastrous for young Brits, and may lead to mass homelessness as young people struggle to find work and are left with nothing, not even a roof over their heads. Any idea that said young adults can simply stay with their parents until they are twenty-five is impractical. Care leavers are released from the system aged eighteen. Some young adults leave home early to escape abusive households. And if a young adult leaves home after school, somehow finds a job, and then loses said job before they reach twenty-five, they may find that moving back in with their parents is not an option, as their parents may have had to downsize their home due to the Bedroom Tax.

And if young people are not earning, then the Tories say they should be learning. And you can see how enthusiastic they are for people to learn, what with the aforementioned tripling of tuition fees. But then, any exploitative ruling class knows that an educated working class is dangerous to them, so it is not surprising to see the poor being scared off by such

outrageous fees. One suspects it is also the reason the ConDem coalition gutted the British movie industry by abolishing the UK Film Council in 2010. Better for British film makers to concentrate on big-budget patriotic drivel and romcom fluff than films that make people think.

Generally, people who have struggled to find work and have been getting by on Jobseekers Allowance have been highlighted by the Tories as especially undesirable, regardless of their age. It has been suggested that those on JSA do one of three things to justify their benefits – work for ‘free’, spend thirty-five hours a week in a branch of Jobcentre Plus searching for jobs while being watched over by staff, or join training courses presumably aimed at making attendees more employable.

The third option is a laughable gimmick. It does not matter how much training someone does to spruce up one’s CV if there are not enough jobs to go around. It is simple mathematics – if there are three million people unemployed and only five hundred thousand jobs available, then the majority will not be able to find work. And where have the jobs gone? Britain used to be an industrial powerhouse. What happened? Why, neoliberalism happened, of course. Far better for the shareholders if the jobs are shipped overseas to be worked by people in third world countries who won’t ask for anywhere near as much money as workers in Britain would.

Then there’s the first option. Most JSA recipients receive less than the national minimum wage. If they are forced to work for corporations for less than minimum wage, it will undermine those currently working on minimum wage, and may in fact lead to greater unemployment as corporations make those current workers redundant in an effort to improve the bottom line. One could be forgiven for suspecting that this is something that appeals greatly to the sociopathic neoliberals of the Tory Party.

As does, no doubt, the second option. Jobcentres are, allegedly, there to help the unemployed to find work. Turning them into holding pens for the unemployed would no doubt mean lucrative contracts to private security firms such as G4S and Serco, who will be charged with overseeing the undesirables. And obviously, holding someone in a building for thirty-five hours a week will not somehow create extra jobs. You cannot apply for something that isn’t there. Do not be surprised if, should these proposals become reality, violence because commonplace at Jobcentres as frustration and hopelessness set in. The atmosphere inside Jobcentres are often tense on a quiet day, and it’s not just from the clients. The staff are overworked and are constantly made to jump through bureaucratic hoops as their superiors try to find new ways to deliver the impossible, or, one could be forgiven for suspecting, to try and find an excuse to stop peoples’ benefits.

So what happens if you’re young and out of work? Work for less than a living wage in one of the most expensive countries on the planet? Take on the crippling debt of the tuition fees? Join the military and go fight resource wars? The Tories claim these sadistic policies will encourage entrepreneurship. They may be more accurate than they realise. People may turn to crime to get by. But if you’re a shareholder in G4S or Serco, this is a good thing. A Prison Industrial Complex similar to that in the United States is there to be built, with slave labour courtesy of the new wave of convicts ensuring maximum profits. But whichever path you take it results in massive profits for corporations and their tame, millionaire front men in the British Government.

Understandably, reaction to these new proposals has been scathing. Parents fear for their children's future. Young people, already struggling, feel persecuted. Poor people expect to be squeezed even harder. Many accuse the Tories of being out of touch. However, the political Elites of Britain certainly appear to know how angry they are making people. And they do not care. There is money to be made, people to exploit and abuse, resources to seize.

To protect themselves, they encourage police brutality, holding lacklustre inquiries into deaths of civilians at the hands of police officers. They arm officers with tasers, allowing people to be tortured by the constabulary. British citizens should be thankful that British police do not, as a rule, carry firearms, or Britons could be subject to the kind of wanton murderous violence that American police officers visit daily upon US citizens. And let us not forget, it was such police barbarity, arrogance, and unaccountability that led to poor and marginalised people tearing large swathes of British cities to pieces in 2011.

During his speech at the Tory Party conference, Cameron hailed social workers, saying they do 'an important job'. If the young and the poor find that due to the actions of the ConDem coalition that they are left with nothing to lose, they may become like the proverbial cornered fox, and the political Elites of Britain may find that they will need far more than social workers to protect them. Fortunate for them then, that private security contractors will be there to pick up the contracts to save them, as will elements of the police who are fond of wading into pitched street battles with their fellow serfs. Divide and conquer.

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