

EDC LEADER'S SPEECH 4.3.15

Last year the Labour Group proved that Kensington & Chelsea was the most unequal borough in Britain; this year we will tell you why.

But before we are subjected to a barrage of platitudes and complacency from the majority party, before we challenge your inequitable budget setting principles and distorted priorities, let us analyse for a moment the TRUE state of our national economic health.

First of all we would like to challenge some of the FALLACIES that have been constructed about the so-called 'economic miracle' that we are supposedly enjoying under the current government.

Let us put aside No 10's extremely well-funded public relations onslaught, and challenge this fictitious construct with some evidence from the Office of National Statistics – my favourite bedtime read.

The Tory Jobs Miracle, January 2015

<input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed	1,958,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Zero Hours *Contracts	1,400,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Could not find a Full Time job	1,319,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Unemployment (16-24)	754,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Zero Hours *Workers	622,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Could not find a Permanent Job	575,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Paid less than Minimum Wage	250,000
<input type="checkbox"/> On Government Training Scheme	117,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Unpaid Family Members	115,000

Nearly 2m unemployed

But in addition:

1.5m on zero hour contracts
 1.3m p/t who want to work f/t
 750k youth unemployment
 500k temp jobs who want perm
 250k paid less than min wage

So, that's 2m unemployed, plus a further 4.3m people who are under-counted, under-employed, or under-paid, all struggling to pay their bills on time, or at all.

Let us now turn to some of the consequences of the way this government has turned 'prudent savings' into total disasters:



@LabourEoin

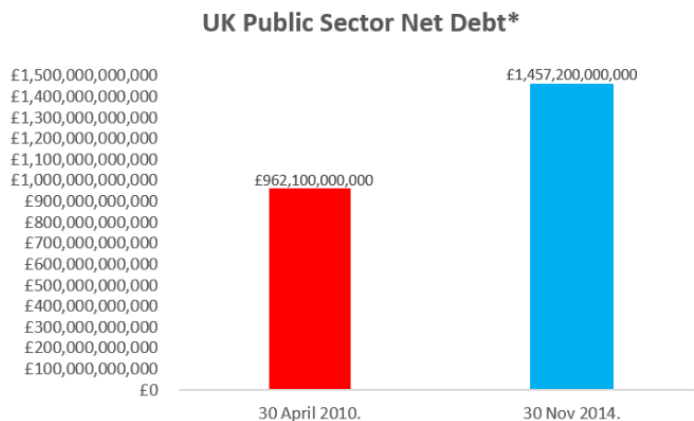
Homelessness up one-third
300k more children in poverty
Worst A&E crisis in 12 yrs
Real terms CUT in Min wage

Cuts, May 2010 – 2015

866 fewer Sure Start Centres
410 Schools Closed
200 Libraries Closed
477 fewer GP Surgeries
39 Fire Stations shut
72 NHS Walk Ins cut
66 Ambulance Stations axed
44 Job Centres shut
9,746 NHS Beds axed
66 A&E/Maternity Wards closing
400 Legal Practices closed
34 Remploy Factories closed

866 Sure Start Centres closed
400 schools closed
200 libraries closed
40 fire stations shut
66 ambulance stations shut
44 job centres shut
400 legal practices axed
66 A&E/Maternity units axed/to b
10,000 NHS beds axed

And what has been the consequence of this 'economic miracle' created by Osborne's 'tough decisions' on the UK economy? What about UK public sector debt for example? Well the DEFICIT (which, for those of you struggling at the back there, is the difference between growth and debt) the DEFICIT has increased by HALF A BILLION POUNDS. Still confused?





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3 October 2014

Dear Mr Leslie

PUBLIC SECTOR FINANCES STATISTICS – DEBT AND DEFICIT

Thank you for your letter dated 1 October 2014 regarding the statement made by the Prime Minister during his speech to the Conservative Party conference in Birmingham in which he said that the country "is paying down its debts".

The latest National Statistics on Public Sector Finances, published by the Office for National Statistics on 30 September 2014, show that Public Sector Net Debt (excluding public sector banks) as at the end of June 2010 was estimated to be £997.4 billion (equivalent to 64.0 per cent of Gross Domestic Product) and £1,432.3 billion at the end of August 2014 (79.1 per cent of GDP), an estimated increase of £434.9 billion over the period.

You're in good company, even the PM (the most economically illiterate leader of our time) is confused on this, so confused that my mates at the ONS wrote to the Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury about the misrepresentation by your PM at the Tory Party Conference last October, where he stated that 'the country is paying down its debts'. A play on words, you might say, others might say a LIE. Growth has increased a smidge, but the deficit has INCREASED by half a billion since 2010.

So what has been the effect of this 'economic miracle' or shall we call it, the OSBORNOMIC FALLACY, on our hard-pressed families? Their wages have been frozen, they are denied a Living Wage while heads of corporations award themselves massive bonuses.

In five short years:

Energy Bills 34% ↑
Childcare 30% ↑
Stamps 52% ↑
Water 20% ↑
Rail Fares 27% ↑
Buses 22% ↑
Rent 15% ↑
Food 19% ↑

And those are country-wide averages. No wonder that our residents here in K&C, from all walks of life, are feeling financially bruised and battered, while they are told that K&C is

the best place to live, with the biggest Reserves, in the universe (according to Cllr Coleridge)

How very confusing it must be, for those of the majority party clinging by their finger-nails onto a way of life that is all but eradicated elsewhere, how frightening to see the comfortable and familiar hierarchies crumble before them?

They cannot bear to see power and influence slipping from their grasp. So they attempt to re-establish the old order by throwing money – our money, our residents' money – at schemes they hope will re-establish the old familiar social order.

So many budgeting decisions are driven by this existential fear.

The dream of our benign but deluded Leader - yes, it's the anachronistic Opera - a failing organisation so full of self-importance that it has refused – yes REFUSED – to implement proper financial accounting and HR procedures demanded by Auditors. Despite this REFUSAL we are – nonsensically - throwing £5m at this loss-making FLOP OPERA to keep the dream alive.

The delusion suffered by the Cabinet at these moments knows no bounds.

They feel beneficent and expect gratitude.

They feel superior and expect deference.

They feel justified and entitled, and expect agreement and compliance, even obedience.

Meanwhile the electorate they are supposed to represent – yes, including many Conservative supporters – are feeling

disempowered and brewing dissent. Long-term Conservative voting residents (Pembroke Road is just one recent example) are appalled when faced with so-called 'consultations', to find that they are POLICY DRIVEN consultations - deterministic and dishonest.

Yes, when the Revolution comes, there may well be pitchforks at the gates, but some will be wielded by Lords, Ladies, millionaire footballers and rock stars, estate agents, and by those very 'middle income' residents that the Deputy Leader has tried so hard, and failed, to engage.

No amount of 'Ask Nick's or Community Engagement cuppas with cupcakes will placate the basement complainers, the Notting Hill Preppers, the Odeon fans, the parents and carers of children with Special Educational Needs, families who depend on the Play Services or Parkwood Hall, Breakfast Clubs, or Children's Centres, or free sports facilities in parks.

Did the Council really send a junior Community Engagement officer to a high-level meeting discussing radicalisation in our communities, with Prevent and Counter-Terrorism? Did we? Did we really think that tea and cupcakes could help with that?

Cabinet Members are so out of touch with residents that they don't understand why a cheering cuppa won't fight terrorism, and they don't understand why people are angry about how the Council spends their money.

Don't tell them to shut up when they object to your spending priorities Cllrs Ahern and E Campbell. They aren't rebellious villagers, Cllr FM, and the Council is not their feudal overlord.

What Cabinet Members have forgotten – and this underpins all their problems – is that it's not their

money. It's the residents' money – and government money – that they are squandering.

Cabinet Members would do well to remember that they are public servants, and they are accountable.

And we know what happens to politicians when they forget who they are elected to serve, don't we? What an appalling breach of trust, a 'fine political career' destroyed by conceit and avarice!

There is an aching void in this Council where good sense, kindness, heart and soul could - and should – meet practical solutions and sound financial management. They are not mutually exclusive, as Cllr Lomas has explained in relation to the Elaine McDonald case. It's all about getting the balance right, and using our funds to benefit those – from all walks of life - who are in need. Compassion and efficiency ARE compatible.

But this Council is devoid of values and devoid of ideas. Over the years we have seen how they mock and deride our proposals – only to implement them when they think we aren't looking - and then take the credit of course! But we are looking and we have noticed how occasionally good sense prevails and the Cabinet implements our proposals.

So we would like the front bench to take a moment, breathe in slooowly, while we thank them for listening to good sense on the odd rare occasion:

LIST OF CREDITS

Keeping St Charles gym
open (Cllr Healy)

The Innovation grant (me)

21st Century Travel Plan,
West London line (Cllr
Blakeman)

Grenfell Tower refurb JB

Hidden Homes (me)

DHP for those in private
housing facing eviction JB

Big Energy Switch (PM)

Opera Holland Park (all)

150% Council Tax on empty
homes (me and JB)

-

New home for Full of Life JB

Kensington Academy –all!

Two new Planning
Enforcement Officers (me)

Shotblasting pavements –me
and my hip

Elm Park Gardens basements
(me again)

Local Housing
Company/CoCo (JB)

Vitamin D supplements! (me
and Cllr Healy)

Improving recycling sacks
(PM)

**‘Spending Reserves
WISELY’
(all of us)**

**BUT disappointingly YOU DIDN’T LISTEN TO US and have
lost a great deal of money ON:**

Wedge Card

Chelsea Care

Opera Holland Park since the year dot

The Design Museum so-called 'sweetener'
Total Facilities Management contract from BT

'SOMETIMES you should listen to us.'

The majority party love to paint the Labour Group as ranting lefties with no financial acumen, and over the years we've heard it all:

Apparently we are
'A gang of commissars' (Cllr Mills)
'dreary gargoyles' (Cllr Moylan)

We represent 'depressing wards .. not fit for purpose' that are 'impossible and inhospitable and frightening' (Cllr Mills) that are 'ghettoes for the poor' Cllr FM

Precisely five years ago I was accused by Cllr Moylan of 'wanton and deliberate cruelty' by warning residents they would be moved out of the borough.

Explain that to the mother travelling three hours a day from Enfield to get her child to school and herself to work, at a cost of £45/week, thin as a rake as she is economising on food for herself – who's just been told by our caring Council to find a new school in her temporary area. Is she supposed to give up her job too? THIS is the reality of life for many in our borough – not the cosy world of cuppas and cupcakes.

And apparently (according to Cllr PB in 2010) I personally have 'no credibility in this chamber'. Thankfully The Independent newspaper, and innumerable reputable media outlets,

disagree, as do many of our senior politicians. We've put Kensington Labour on the map.

We've talked to future Dep PM Harriet Harman about Arts Policy (she asked a lot about accountability and Opera Holland Park)

We've talked to Emma Reynolds, future Housing Minister, about Housing policy in K&C

We talked to potential future Mayor of London Tessa Jowell about the safety of our young people on the streets

We've talked to Fiona Twycross AM about Food Poverty and inequality

We've talked to Tom Copley AM about the London Plan/housing

We've talked to Lord Eames the former Bishop of Armagh, who initiated Northern Ireland Peace Talks, about terrorism and radicalisation

And yes, on instruction from Harriet Harman, we're going to talk to Ed Balls about Mansion Tax, because he needs to listen to how it could affect our borough, and how many residents are not rich but the victims of property hysteria, and how £100k is NOT the mean average earnings in K&C Cllr Feilding-Mellen (it is £30K).

Yes, the truth is very different. The truth is that we in THIS Labour Group are serious, intelligent, hard-working and committed **socialists** (yes, I said the 'S' word), and we have ideals about community, and a vision for our borough, that is shared by many residents, not only our natural voters, but those in the middle ground politically. They tell us they are sick to death of the high-handed and condescending behaviour of many members of the majority party on this Council who believe that they are living in the Middle Ages, and that the peasants should shut up.

The claptrap and arrant nonsense we are subjected to in relation to the budget setting process has reached a fine science.

So, every year when we propose adopting the London Living Wage, we are countered by the fallacy that the Council pays (nearly) all their staff more than this rate. The Labour Group understands perfectly well that all the low-paid and least valued jobs have been farmed off to contractors who pay them slave wages and work them like dogs. So the Council has embraced a system whereby decent wages are withheld from thousands of workers. Then they are TOLD by Cllr Lightfoot to apply for Housing and Work-Related Benefits, and THEN they are stigmatised and vilified and denounced as work-shy scroungers who need to try harder. So that's the game? Create dependency and then deride it? Job done.

So the Council, slicing up work to be auctioned off to their avaricious corporate supporters, creates a **predisposition** to inequality. Rising rent, fuel and transports costs **precipitate** people ever closer to the financial black hole, and our Council's priorities and balancing of cost-cutting, squeezing wage rises and forcing long hours, are all factors that create **and perpetuate** inequality and increase real and absolute poverty in our borough. One word sums this all up. RICKETS. In Kensington and Chelsea children have been admitted to hospital suffering hypocalcaemic fits and are found to have RICKETS. The disgrace of our age.

Despite forcing dependency on SOCIAL welfare by freezing pay or allowing contractors to underpay, this dependency is considered **bad**. However, CORPORATE welfare is considered **fair**, as is tax avoidance.

But we think – paying tax is your membership fee to the human race, your investment in a decent society that looks after vulnerable people; it's a moral responsibility.

But let's see how **corporate welfare** is unfairly supporting landlords and property owners in this borough:

- Capital gains tax relief, costing the country £6bn/year
- Lack of any property tax, costing £11bn/yr
- Right to Buy subsidy which costs cc£2bn/year
- Support with mortgage payments if in difficulty
- Shared ownership subsidies
- Ease of obtaining buy to let interest only mortgages, where buy to let is destroying our communities and forcing up prices

And then Cllr Coleridge announces that people who cannot afford to live in the borough should go elsewhere. Social cleansing. Job done!

There is no better illustration of this warped attitude of our Cabinet of Curiosities than how they spend our money. Largesse is bestowed on high art, high culture, paving Museum-land, opera and erotic paintings (yuck).

Meanwhile, penny-pinching is exercised in relation to vulnerable children, working parents, the sick and excluded (shame).

I look forward to hearing your officer-written speeches embellished with the odd amusing personal anecdote Cllr E Campbell, and I'm sure we will weep buckets when you tell us how austerity has lead you to such 'difficult decisions'. But as you lay out the very different decision-making processes that

are applied to your very unequal priorities, remember that we see right through you; your budget-making decisions reveal everything we need to know about WHO YOU THINK deserves RESIDENTS' MONEY to be spent on them, and WHO you consider to be undeserving.

In our borough, we can afford to make better choices. So be bold Cllr Paget-Brown, and challenge Cllr Lightfoot's more extreme proposals. There is a better way.

It's time to listen, and time to care.

Last year the Labour Group proved that K&C was the most unequal borough in Britain. This year we are looking at why.

I entreat the Council to listen carefully to our proposals and treat them with respect and not the usual disdain. We in this Council can be kinder, fairer, more egalitarian, more transparent, more accountable, and we can work more intelligently to spread the load more evenly, and to save, and spend the residents' cash where it benefits residents the most.

It has been proved that more equal societies are happier and work harder and better. Let's take a first step tonight, to create a fairer and more equal Kensington and Chelsea, this year and for the future – not for the few, but for the many.

End
EDC
