

UK Prime Minister David Cameron proclaims austerity cuts to be “permanent”

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British Prime Minister David Cameron used the annual speech at the Lord Mayor’s Banquet in London’s Guildhall to declare that the devastating austerity being imposed by his government will be “permanent.”

Surrounded by the opulence of the Guildhall’s grandest room, Cameron addressed 900 rich and well-pampered guests enjoying a sumptuous banquet, courtesy of the City of London Corporation’s £12 million fund for ceremony and hospitality.

Speaking from a gold throne and gilded lectern, Cameron said the government’s main priority was “an economy with a state we can afford”, denouncing those “who seem to think that the way you reduce the cost of living in this country is for the state to spend more and more taxpayers’ money.”

His remarks were in part aimed at the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, sitting alongside him. Welby had previously raised concerns about the social impact of cuts to welfare benefits.

“At a time when family budgets are tight, it is really worth remembering that this spending [on benefits] comes out of the pockets of the same taxpayers whose living standards we want to see improve. I hope the Archbishop of Canterbury will forgive me for saying—it’s not robbing Peter to pay Paul, but rather robbing Peter to pay Peter,” said Cameron.

The biggest threat facing Britain “is if our budget deficit and debts get out of control again... We have a plan—and we are carefully implementing that plan.”

Stating that the slashing of public spending under the coalition had already “cut the deficit by a third,” he said there was more to come. “But that doesn’t just mean making difficult decisions on public spending. It also means something more profound. It means building a leaner, more efficient state. We need to do

more with less. Not just now, but permanently.”

Citing some of the massive job cuts and privatisations underway Cameron lauded a “leaner, more efficient, more affordable state... There are 40 percent fewer people working in the Department for Education—but over 3,000 more free schools and academies, with more children doing tougher subjects than ever before. There are 23,000 fewer administrative roles in the NHS—but 5,000 more doctors, with shorter waiting times.”

The implications of Cameron’s remarks are chilling. The NHS budget is being slashed by £20 billion by 2015, around one-fifth of its annual budget. Calls are now being made to increase this to £30 billion. This is being accompanied by speeding up privatisation with the introduction of the Health and Social Care Act of 2012.

On the same day Cameron spoke, the Royal College of Nurses revealed that NHS cuts were jeopardising patient safety. The RCN said that there was now a shortage of some 20,000 nurses in the health service, with inadequate staffing a common factor in especially high mortality rates in certain hospitals.

Similarly state education is being eroded and privatised with the widespread introduction of academies and free schools. Teachers are currently under a three-year wage freeze and cuts in pension rights have resulted in an estimated 12 percent fall in their pay.

This month the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development placed the UK on the lowest ranks of 65 countries on educational attainment, behind Russia, Poland and Hungary. In an earlier report, it described British schools as among the most socially segregated in the world.

As Cameron made clear, the real objective of mass job losses, privatisation, and falling living standards is

not “reducing the national deficit” but satisfying the demands of the City of London, which he described as “the global home of finance.”

Cameron was unabashed in his glorification of the 1980s Thatcher government, whose policies laid the basis for a British economy which is today a custom-built tool of the banks and super-rich. Britain’s success “in the global race” meant “taking the country that led the agricultural revolution, the industrial revolution and the market-based revolution of the 80s and equipping it to lead the economic revolution of today,” he said.

No one would have known that it was the rampant criminality, speculation and money mad profiteering, pioneered and led by the parasites at the London Stock Exchange and Wall Street and their “market-based revolution,” that resulted in the 2008 financial meltdown—a collapse that is paid for out of the living standards of workers in Britain, Europe and globally.

Demanding a “fundamental culture change in our country,” he cited one that “values that typically British, entrepreneurial, buccaneering spirit, and that rewards people with the ambition to make things, sell things and create jobs for others.”

Cameron was at least candid in outlining what the most rapacious sections of the British ruling elite are demanding. The original buccaneers were pirates who robbed Spanish ships in the Caribbean in the 17th century.

Cameron’s meaning certainly wasn’t lost on the right wing *Daily Telegraph*, who editorialised, “Such piratical imagery has, in the past, held negative connotations for capitalism—suggesting exploitation, even criminality. But Mr Cameron’s reclaiming of it promises a celebration of the wealth-creating potential of the private sector that many of his backbenchers will welcome.”

The “government should go starboard bound,” (to the right) it enthused, adding, “This is a good direction to sail in.”

Unsurprisingly billionaire oligarch Rupert Murdoch’s *Sun* endorsed Cameron’s message with the headline, “BUCCANEER WE GO—Build business and shrink the State.”

For the *Daily Express* Cameron’s speech was a “call to arms.”

As the representative of modern day looters, Cameron set out plans to gut public spending still further for the

benefit of the super-rich. His government are cutting corporation tax to 20 percent, and “slashing” red tape on business. At the same time he defended the £21.8 billion cuts in welfare since 2010 that are throwing tens of thousands further into poverty.

Cameron also announced that he would lead a trade visit to China in early December. On a visit to the country in October, Chancellor George Osborne had warned that it was not appropriate to speak of China as a giant “sweatshop”, holding up its economy—one based on rampant capitalist exploitation by transnational corporations, protected and enforced by the methods of dictatorship—as the model Britain should emulate.

While the right wing media hailed Cameron’s speech, the nominally liberal press declared they were taken back by Cameron’s stated aim that austerity should be permanent. The *Guardian* and the *New Statesman* both cited Cameron’s claim on coming to office in 2010 at the head of a coalition with the Liberal Democrats that “I didn’t come into politics to make cuts,” in order to claim that the prime minister had changed tack.

This is nonsense, designed to chloroform their readers. In April 2009, more than a year before becoming prime minister, Cameron had declared that any government led by him would usher in an “age of austerity”. The media are well aware that this is the real agenda of the coalition—one that is shared by the Labour Party. If they are shocked it is only because Cameron has let the dirty secret of Britain’s ruling elite out of the bag.



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