

The Problem Of Squatters In London

By *Alexander Baron* - May 30, 2015



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This week, the BBC2 Victoria Derbyshire programme **reported on** the eviction of a group of squatters from Mayfair, one of the most expensive and exclusive areas of London. The squatters concerned have been ordered out of the premises they are currently occupying by the High Court. The law concerning squatting was **tightened up** 3 years ago; the main concern was that residential properties – which may have been people’s homes – were being in effect stolen from under their noses. What though of business premises, empty factories, shops and so on?

While no one should trespass on somebody else’s property, there are real problems here, namely people, including the young, the vulnerable and at times the desperate are being

left without resources, without money...to fend for themselves on the streets. The inevitable result of this is anti-social, criminal and at times dangerous behaviour: begging, prostitution, shoplifting, violent crime...

Of course, it is very easy for those of a particular political hue to condemn these people with ludicrous statements about them smartening themselves up, finding jobs, etc, but the jobs are not there, and many of “these people” are unemployable in this highly technologically advanced age.

In the run up to Christmas last year, another group of squatters **were evicted** from a commercial building they had taken over in Central London. The young people the BBC spoke to outside both these squats were clearly very articulate, and just as clearly they are not typical squatters, but even allowing for this, there are many squatters who are in difficult situations; there are also still people sleeping rough in all areas of the country, including about forty **in Cornwall**. That does not sound a large number, and many of these people will have mental health issues or problems with drink, but they are only the tip of a very large iceberg. In addition to rough sleepers and squatters there are those living in temporary and emergency accommodation who have been housed by local authorities. With the re-election of the Cameron Government (without a Coalition partner to put a break on its austerity campaign) the problems faced by all these groups: homeless in temporary accommodation, squatters, and rough sleepers, are likely only to worsen. So what can be done?

The simple solution is money, and to house every person squatting in the UK would not cost that much if we were to cut off the £1 billion aid we are currently providing to the oil-rich Nigeria, or better still, the money can come from the big banks. Last November, six of these **were fined** £2.6 billion by American and UK regulators for financial irregularities, and there have been more since. Instead of remitting such money to the Treasury where it will disappear into the black hole of the National Debt, next time they are fined so, the payment could and should go straight to local authorities to cure the problem of chronic homelessness one and for all.