

## The Latest News

# The True Face Of Cameron's Austerity



FEATURED NEWS POLITICS

By Alexander Baron



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SHARES

In 1905, a destitute seventeen year old youth was arrested for stealing a loaf of bread. He received a 14 day sentence, but that was not the end of the matter; his case was raised in Parliament, and Home Secretary Aretas Akers-Douglas confirmed that his department was looking into the matter.

Shameful though it may have been that a vulnerable youth could be left to starve in the England of 1905, it was at least understandable. A century and more ago there was a lot less wealth in the country as in the world. Most ordinary people did not have their own bathrooms much less refridgerators, central heating, or walk around with telephones in their pockets. But what of poverty today?



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### Theft through Starvation.

HC Deb 11 May 1905 vol 146 cc49-50

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**MR. JAMES O'CONNOR** I beg to ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department §  
 whether his attention has been called to the case of James Nicholson, aged 17 years, of no  
 home, who was sentenced last Saturday at the South-Western Court to 14 days  
 imprisonment for stealing a loaf of bread, and to the fact that Nicholson told the policemen  
 who arrested him that he was hungry and destitute; and whether, in view of the Court  
 missionary's testimony to Nicholson's character, he will order his release.

**MR. AKERS-DOUGLAS** I have called for a report from the magistrate who dealt with §  
 this case, but I have not yet received his reply. As soon as I do so, I will carefully consider  
 the matter.

**MR. JAMES O'CONNOR** Will the right hon. Gentleman bear in mind the man has §  
 already served a week of his sentence, and will he see he is released immediately? 50

[No Answer was returned.]

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#### *Theft through Starvation*

This new poverty exists amidst plenty; true, like the poor, the rich have always been with us, but should people really have to steal food in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Britain? Absolutely not, and thankfully there appears to be at least one person in officialdom who realises this. Exhibiting more common sense than is usually dispensed by the bench, District Judge Roger Eley **granted an absolute discharge** to a man charged with stealing worthless food from a Tesco store in Sunderland.

Paul Barker and his wife had been left high and dry by the benefit system. Their children are said to be living with their grandparents, while Mr Barker and his wife are eking out an existence as best they can. Together they raided the waste food compound at the store at dead of night back in January, but his case came to court only recently. His wife has yet to appear in court for the same offence.

We all have a hard luck story to tell, but his is sadder than most. He is said to already have three hundred pounds in fines outstanding. Thankfully, Judge Eley saw the futility of fining a man who has no meaningful resources. How would he pay such a fine without resorting to illegality?

Alas, not every state official exhibits such common sense; last month, a man **was given** a 12 week gaol sentence in Nottingham for begging after being found in breach of a criminal anti-social order. Another one was fined £440 the previous month, and was in court again for the same offence. According to one jobsworth: "People need to know that they invariably use this money to feed their habit, whether that is alcohol or drugs. We are asking for the public to work with us and change how they support others." He neglected to say though how unemployable individuals like this can be supported, although the Green Party appears to have a **partial solution**.

Now that the sheeple of Britain have voted for another five years of austerity, we can expect to see a great deal more of this sort of thing. If you should fall by the wayside, you can find directions to your local foodbank **here**. That's if your electricity hasn't been cut off, and you can still use your computer.