



PRESS RELEASE

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Coalition government policies have increased social inequalities in the past year, says Professor Danny Dorling

A year into the Coalition government and the UK remains the fourth most unequal by income ratio of the 25 richest countries in the world. Within the UK, inequalities in income and wealth rose during 2010 as the rich got richer and the poor poorer. But why exactly does this inequality persist? In the updated paperback edition of his bestselling book, *Injustice: Why social inequality persists*, leading social commentator and geographer Professor Danny Dorling from the University of Sheffield, looks back at what has happened over the last year to cause further inequality and injustice in British society.

In the book, which was published in hardback to widespread acclaim and media coverage last year, Professor Dorling argued that the five social evils identified by Beveridge at the dawn of the British welfare state (ignorance, want, idleness, squalor and disease) are taking new forms in the most unequal of affluent countries, while social injustices are now being recreated, renewed and supported by five new sets of 'unjust' beliefs (elitism is efficient, exclusion is necessary, prejudice is natural, greed is good, despair is inevitable).

In the year since the book was first published, the Coalition government has advanced many policies which demonstrate that these newly identified beliefs are widely held. The 'unjust' beliefs, which are necessary to maintaining inequality, have thus persisted into 2010 and beyond. Examples of their continued relevance to British life include:

- **'Elitism is efficient'**: The 2010 Browne Review of Higher Education recommended limitless 'market' fees for higher education. A tripling of the annual fees for university was duly announced by the Coalition government in Autumn 2010, meaning that higher education in Britain will become the most expensive and hence the most elitist in Europe. The Coalition has also abolished the Educational Maintenance Allowance, which will dissuade some young people from disadvantaged backgrounds from staying on at school and further impoverish many of those who do.

- **'Exclusion is necessary'**: Frank Field's independent review of child poverty, which started in June 2010, began by pouring scorn on the use of European-wide definitions of child poverty, rather than trying to solve the problem of poverty. He suggested redefining the problem, saying that there would always be many people living on less than 60% of median incomes and that this could not be avoided. At the same time, the top of the income scale saw the return of bankers' bonuses, just as plans were being made to cut benefits. Both the excessive pay and the cuts to the incomes of the poorest were presented as "necessary".
- **'Prejudice is natural'**: Will Hutton's independent review of the pay divide, commissioned by the Coalition government, ignored progressive suggestions, such as the exclusion from public sector contracts of private sector firms which break the 20:1 income ratio, thereby ensuring that youth unemployment will continue to rise. The notes at the back of the Interim Report suggest that anyone who is not deemed to be 'core staff' should be excluded from the suggested calculation within the public sector. The final report published in March 2011 then failed to make even this flawed recommendation to curtail top pay.
- **'Greed is good'**: In 2010 the wealthiest people in Britain revealed in *The Sunday Times* Rich List saw their greatest ever annual gains in wealth of 29.9% to stand at £335.5 billion shared between the 1000 wealthiest people in Britain. The number of billionaires in the UK has increased at March 2011 by 10.4% to stand at 32, despite the country becoming much poorer overall as Gross National Product fell. The very rich and super rich are taking more of Britain's shrinking share of world income.
- **'Despair is inevitable'**: Sir Michael Marmot's review of health inequalities in 2010 failed to focus on the need to consider the excesses at the top end of the social hierarchy. It concentrated too much on the material deprivation at the bottom. During the last year, more evidence has emerged of the harm caused, as the very rich pull away from the rich, and the rich pull away from the merely affluent. The affluent see the gap growing between them and people on average incomes (which are falling) and then those on average incomes fear falling even further behind as the greatest cuts of all have been made to the incomes of the poorest tenth.

Hard hitting and uncompromising in his attack on those in power, Dorling says: "Despite rhetoric about a fairer society, these examples show that the Coalition government policies are creating anything but fairness which is why inequalities and injustice are currently growing. What is clear is that much of what is currently wrong is either seen as unavoidable or justifiable. These beliefs, which see growing inequalities as inevitable, are what need to change".

Speaking about the book, Polly Toynbee of *The Guardian*, commented, "For decades researchers have shown the damage inequality does to all society and Dorling's wonderful book extends this. With brilliance and passion Dorling analyses the mind-set of entitlement among those who hold ever tighter to money, power and life's best rewards, generation to generation."

Daniel Dorling is speaking about *Injustice: Why social inequality persists* at the launch of the paperback book at 6.30pm on Tuesday 5th April at a meeting of the Equality Trust in Manchester. Further information and free sign-up at:

<http://injustice.eventbrite.com/>

Endsnotes

1. The paperback edition of *Injustice: Why social inequality persists* by Daniel Dorling will be published by The Policy Press on 5th April 2011, price £9.99 (ISBN 978 1 84742 7205). It is available to buy from www.policypress.co.uk/display.asp?K=9781847427205 at 20% discount, or from Marston Book Services, P. O. Box 269, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4YN Tel: 01235 465500 plus £2.75 postage and packing.
2. The book contains seven tables and 25 figures. A bibliography of over 1600 recent pieces of evidence has also been brought together in creating the arguments to try to show where much new thinking is heading. A new preface by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett (authors of *The Spirit Level*) and afterword by Danny Dorling have been added to the paperback edition.
3. Daniel Dorling is Professor of Human Geography at the University of Sheffield. He is available for interview. Media enquiries to:
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4. A press pack can be downloaded from:
http://www.policypress.co.uk/info_for_journalists.asp
5. An online appendix with 8 tables is available here:
<http://www.policypress.co.uk/display.asp?K=9781847427205>
6. Of all the 25 richest countries in the world (excluding very small states), the US and the UK rank as second and fourth most unequal respectively when the annual income of the best-off tenth of their population is compared with that of the poorest tenth. Starting with the most unequal, the top five 10% richest: 10% poorest income ratios are:
17.7 Singapore
15.9 US
15 Portugal
13.8 UK
13.4 Israel
And the most equal are:
6.9 Germany
6.2 Sweden
6.1 Norway
5.6 Finland
4.5 Japan.

(For more on this list see Footnote 37 page 339 of 'Injustice')

7. Britain is at its most unequal for 80 years in terms of inequalities in income (the share of the richest 1% is almost back to 1920s levels); in terms of geographical inequalities in health (areas are as polarised as in the 1930s); and in terms of spatial polarisation in voting (approaching 1918 levels of spatial segregation by 2010). All figures in Table 5 of 'Injustice' (p. 176).
8. The Policy Press (www.policypress.co.uk) is a leading social science publisher based at the University of Bristol and is committed to publishing books that make a difference. Follow The Policy Press on twitter @policypress and get updates on Danny Dorling's activities at @dannydorling