

Campaign update: The cuts

In October WDM staff joined a march on parliament to protest against the 'Comprehensive Spending Review'. We joined thousands of people representing different UK groups such as teachers, nurses and students who marched to Downing Street in disgust at the measures announced by a government made up of millionaires. The spending review seemed intent on recouping the losses caused by the banking crisis from the poorest and most vulnerable members of society, whilst leaving the perpetrators of the crisis untouched.

As the UK (or at least some people in the UK) braces itself for the impact of this Comprehensive Spending Review, WDM is part of the growing movement working to oppose the drastic cuts to our public services.

WDM's extensive work with anti-poverty organisations across Africa and Asia over the past 40 years places us in a good position to provide an international perspective on the UK cuts debate. The austerity measures imposed on many countries in the global South during the 1980s and 1990s have shown that cuts do not bring about the sustainable economic growth they are supposed to deliver. Most countries that had such economic policies forced upon them by the World Bank and IMF witnessed not only a fire-sale of vital public assets that harmed long-term growth prospects, but also suffered a downturn in their domestic agriculture and industry as their economies were geared towards export-orientation conducted by (and largely for) foreign transnational corporations.

In addition, the imposition of austerity measures coupled with liberalisation impacted most harshly on poorer sections of society in the global south. The gap between rich and poor widened almost universally in countries that underwent 'structural adjustment', as public services and safety nets for the poorest people were slashed and deregulation and privatisation allowed big business to flourish. This often happened at the expense of service users and consumers.

In stark contrast, countries that resisted the measures such as have had more equitable growth patterns.

WDM is working with groups in the UK that are fighting the cuts on a national level and is providing an international and historical narrative to the cuts debate. It will show the dangers of following the current economic path chosen by the coalition government. It is also a great opportunity for solidarity; to stand with our partners around the world for an economic system that will result in a fairer and more just society.

WDM's current campaigns also help those resisting cuts with practical proposals for a fairer, greener economic system. For example, WDM's campaign for a Green Investment Bank; and our support for a financial transactions tax to help finance grants for developing countries to cope with climate change not only highlight the problems with current economic policies, but also show that there are alternative paths to follow.

You can keep in regular contact with our campaigns and staff news via our online blog and website. See www.wdm.org.uk.