



News from Westminster

20th April 2007 Phil Hope MP

More Protection for Pensions

Pensions dominated the House of Commons the first week back after the Easter recess and the Tories showed themselves to be in total disarray.

On Tuesday the Chancellor gave the Tory front bench a drubbing in the opposition day debate and the following day during the Third Reading of the Pensions Bill the Tories' false pensions promise backfired.

The support for the Pensions Bill will mean increased financial help so all 125,000 people who lost their pensions when their schemes wound up under-funded between 1997 and 2005 will get support from the Financial Assistance Scheme.

Labour's Financial Assistance Scheme will guarantee all 125,000 people who lost out can receive 80% of their core expected pension. And after listening to the views of MPs and trade unions a review will be set up to establish whether alternative sources of funding can be found to get nearer to 90%.

It was also pleasing to hear that there will be new help for schemes that are still solvent after listening to campaigns from many Labour MPs. I know from cases in Corby and East Northants that this will give help to many local people.

The Tories on the other hand were exposed for making false promises to those who lost their pensions by trying to defeat the government with un-funded proposals that the Association of British Insurers described as damaging for pensioners because they risked 'robbing Peter to pay Paul'.

The Tories' financial incompetence has been exposed again. In the morning Shadow Chancellor, George Osborne said that the Tories' plans wouldn't mean increased public spending, but he was contradicted by their Work and Pensions spokesman in the House of Commons who admitted their scheme would mean an increased risk to the public purse.

Labour launches new climate change pledge card

Labour launched a new climate change pledge card this week which sets out how households can take simple steps to cut energy bills and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

The pledge card also highlights five ways that the Labour Government will support individual action.

Five things you can do:

- Turn your thermostat down 1 C
- Turn appliances off when not in use
- Replace your light bulbs with energy saving ones
- Do your washing at a lower temperature
- Get a home energy check

I'm proud of the work that Labour is doing domestically and internationally, in central and Local Government to combat climate change.

I hope you'll join with me in doing your bit to reduce emissions at home and encourage your family and friends to do the same.



Labour to deliver carbon neutral eco schools

Up to 200 eco schools will save nearly 5 million tonnes of CO2

Labour will deliver up to 200 carbon neutral eco schools over the next three years, saving nearly 5 million tonnes of CO2.

As part of the Labour Government's programme to rebuild or refurbish every secondary school across the country, an additional £110 million will be invested to create the eco school scheme.

And all secondary schools will also receive a copy of the Academy Award-winning Al Gore film 'An Inconvenient Truth'.

Schools contribute 15 per cent of the public sector's carbon footprint. Investing in these schools will make a substantial difference in the fight against climate change.

If we succeed, this could result in 2,000 carbon neutral secondary schools,

enabling us to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 8 million tonnes over the next decade.

Our new schools must be built to last into the next century, but they should be constructed to enable the planet to survive for the centuries beyond.

Ten years ago our young people were being taught in crumbling schools with leaking roofs and broken windows, thanks to the Tory years of under-investment.

Today, despite David Cameron's warm words on schools, his commitment to share the proceeds of growth would mean cuts of £21 billion this year alone - putting Labour's investment in schools and the environment at risk.

Protecting Tenant's Deposits

Tenants who pay a deposit to a landlord will have enhanced protection under the new Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme.

Where damage has been done to a rented property it is absolutely right that the cost of repairing that damage is taken from the deposit funds. But, where no damage has occurred, keeping hold of this money is unfair.

That is why Labour has taken steps to ensure that deposit money is better protected and introduced new dispute resolution services that will limit the amount of disagreements that end up in court.

The vast majority of landlords and agents act fairly and take their responsibilities seriously.

However, there are a minority pocketing deposits and profiteering from other people's money. This is completely unacceptable. The new rules will inject greater fairness into the rental market and mean that when a tenant sticks to the rules, the landlord or agent must too.

From 6 April Landlords and agents will, by law, have to sign up to one of three schemes that have been awarded contracts by the government. If you want to know more details please get in touch with my office on **01536 443325**

George Osborne Misses the Bus

On Tuesday it was reported that the Tories announced a new national 'school bus plan' but had no clue how this would be funded.

This came on top of Monday's announcement by David Cameron and Shadow Transport Secretary, Chris Grayling of new unfunded spending pledges for the railways.

In an email exchange leaked to The Observer the Shadow Chancellor, George Osborne's advisor unsuccessfully attempted to stop the statement from including any more unfunded spending pledges.

This new Tory bus plan, on top of unfunded promises of new rail spending show just how weak George Osborne's grip on spending is.

He has failed again to stop the Tories promising money they haven't got.

George Osborne has missed the bus once again.