



# News from Westminster

\*\*Budget special\*\* March 2008 Phil Hope MP

## A Budget for stability and opportunity



I was in the Chamber this week to hear the Chancellor, Alistair Darling, deliver his first Budget.

This is always one of the great Parliamentary occasions. But I'm more interested in what it means for people in Corby and East Northants. And I was pleased that this Budget is great news for pensioners, families and children in Corby and East Northants.

Over 9 million pensioner households nationwide and 19,380 households in Corby and East Northants constituency will get extra cash to pay their heating bills this year.

And 13,425 families in this area will gain from the increases in Child Benefit.

I welcome the Budget focus on tackling two of the big issues of today - child poverty and climate change. Under Labour, we have had 10 years of economic stability and growth - we should never put that at risk.

The investment the Labour Government has made has supported many people in realising their potential. By maintaining a strong and stable economy we have been able to invest in our public services after years of underinvestment.

Today the global slowdown means we face uncertain economic times. The turbulence in the American mortgage market has touched economies all over the world - including ours. But here in Britain we are better placed than other countries and better placed than we ever were in the past to deal with this.

The Budget reports that the economy is resilient, and continuing to grow. The Government is meeting its strict fiscal rules for the public finances.

So I support this responsible Budget to secure Britain's stability in the face of global uncertainty.



Lifting 600,000 children out of poverty has been one of Labour's proudest achievements. Budget 2008 sets out new measures to lift 250,000 more children out of poverty:

- ✓ Raising the child tax credit by £50
- ✓ Changing the rules for Housing & Council Tax Benefit to make the poorest working parents as much as £17 a week better off
- ✓ Investing £125m in innovative approaches to tackling child poverty

Over 9 million pensioner households will benefit from extra cash to pay their heating bills this year. Budget 2008 will raise the Winter Fuel Payment that Labour introduced:

- ✓ **From £200 to £250 for 60s and over**
- ✓ **From £300 to £400 for 80s and over**

None of this would be possible without the stability and resilience of the economy, thanks to the tough decisions taken by Labour over the last 10 years.



Hard working families have seen the benefits of ten years of stability: growing employment, low inflation and low interest rates. Labour will continue to provide the best support for families with children.

- ✓ Work to keep low inflation and low interest rates
- ✓ Boost in Child Benefit to £20 a week

Labour's investment has seen young people achieve some of the best ever results. Labour remains committed to unlocking all the talents of all young people.

- ✓ £200m to help those remaining schools achieve 5 A\*-C grades at GCSE
- ✓ New opportunities for every person to gain the skills they need
- ✓ Increased investment to support links between business and Further Education colleges



Tackling climate change is one of the most significant challenges the world faces. Budget 2008 sets the foundation for Britain to further take a lead at home and abroad:

- ✓ Encouraging lower carbon homes and offices
- ✓ Giving incentives for motorists to purchase fuel efficient cars
- ✓ Committing to tough legal targets on emissions

# **Tories would put Britain's economic success and stability at risk**

**Economic stability will always be Labour's first priority. In the current global financial circumstances, it is irresponsible of the Tories to risk Britain's hard won economic stability by placing tax cuts and uncostered spending promises ahead of this objective.**

But from David Cameron down, the Conservative frontbench have demonstrated that they can't resist any opportunity to grab newspaper headlines by promising a tax cut or a spending pledge.

In the last twelve months the Conservative Party have made over **£10bn of tax pledges.**

On top of these tax pledges, the Tories have continued to make dozens of spending commitments - including David Cameron's National School Leaver Programme, three extra infantry battalions and high speed rail pilots - without offering how to pay for them.

The reality is the Tories' plans don't add up and would leave a huge black hole in the economy, putting stability, jobs, mortgages and investment in public services at risk.

Having staked their credibility on providing a fully costed economic programme David Cameron and George Osborne have failed their own test and now preside over a black hole in Tory spending plans.

**It is clear that at a time of economic uncertainty the Conservatives would play fast and loose with the stability of the British economy.**

**Billions of pounds of tax cuts, on top of many unfunded spending pledges would put Britain's economic success and stability at risk.**