

Churches Update

News from the Labour Party



w: labour.org.uk/faith Issue 14, 2012

Ed Miliband: “Banks must reconnect to society”

Labour leader calls for banks to be rooted in their communities

Labour leader, Ed Miliband, has called for banks to act more responsibly and be driven by the “*values of fairness*” rather than the “*the politics of envy.*” He also warned bankers that they must wave goodbye to their culture of excessive bonuses and reconnect with the rest of the country. His comments echo those made by church leaders.

In a speech at Canary Wharf, Ed spoke of his wish to see what he called “*one nation banks*” whilst renewing his calls for the banking sector to return to a culture where the interests of banks were not divorced with those of wider society. Ed said: “*One nation banking means the private sector and the state need to work together in partnership to get the system working for small business. It means we will need a much more diverse and competitive banking system which is more rooted in our communities.*”

Ed’s comments on banking followed a report published last year by the churches’ Ecumenical Council of Corporate Responsibility (ECCR). The report examined how the activities of banks affect customers, employers and communities. It called for banks in the UK and Ireland do more to address the impact they have on society, in order to regain trust after the financial crisis. Speaking to Church Times after the report was published, The

Bishop of Birmingham, the Rt Revd David Urquhart, said that society needed to ask the “*right questions about the financial system*”.

Ed supported the Bishop’s view in his speech saying: “*We now must ask questions*

about the future of banking which have not been asked for a generation.” He announced he is exploring the idea of creating a British Investment Bank as part of the Labour Party’s Business and Enterprise Review. Ed also argued for greater accountability and transparency in the banking sector by calling for banks to publish the details of all their large bonuses. He said: “*For all the reform of the way bonuses are paid, they remain on a scale beyond the imagination of the*

“We will need a much more diverse and competitive banking system which is more rooted in our communities.”



vast majority of the population.” The Tory-led Government has failed to implement rules that the Labour party legislated for to make banks reveal how many employees are earning over one million pounds, so that shareholders can hold them to account. Ed said: “*It is absurd for David Cameron to claim this simple effective measure is too onerous for banks...It is the very least the public has a right to expect and demand.*”

Labour has previously criticised the Government for its inaction over bankers’ bonuses. As part of its five-point plan for jobs and growth, Ed has called on the Government to introduce a tax on bankers’ bonuses this year, in addition to the permanent bank levy, to fund 100,000 jobs for young people.

Speaking to Churches Update, Ed said: “*The Labour Party has led the debate in arguing for a more responsible capitalism. Meanwhile the Tory-led Government has failed to recognise our concerns and has instead nodded through hundreds of million in bonuses to loss-making investment bankers.*”

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Government slow to act on metal theft

Yvette Cooper MP, Labour's Shadow Home Secretary, has criticised the Government for being *"too slow"* to act after the Home Secretary, Theresa May MP, finally announced plans to outlaw paying cash for scrap metal.

Earlier this year the Government blocked a Private Members' Bill put forward by Labour backbencher, Graham Jones MP. The Bill called for the Government to overhaul the *"flawed"* 1964 Scrap Metal Dealers Act and for a *"robust"* licensing system to be introduced. It is estimated that metal theft cost the Church of England £10 million last year.

Although welcoming the news, which was announced in a statement to Parliament, Yvette said: *"Despite this growing problem, the Home Secretary is being too slow and too sluggish. There is still no proper strategy to cut crime, or to deal with a problem which risks escalating out of control."*

Labour has put forward a four point plan to tackle metal theft. It is supported by British Transport Police, the

A message from Yvette Cooper



Labour's Shadow Home Secretary

"The Government's plans do not go far enough to tackle the growing metal theft epidemic. The proposals to increase fines and stop cash payments at scrap yards are welcome, but they are not enough to help police crack down on this damaging crime blighting commuters, churches and communities across the country."

Association of Chief Police Officers and by the Neighbourhood Watch. The measures include giving police the powers to close rogue traders down and require anyone selling scrap to provide proof of identity, recorded at point of sale. They would allow legitimate trade to continue whilst making it harder and more expensive for organised crime and opportunistic thieves to profit from metal theft.

Keeping Sundays special

A message from Stephen Timms MP, Labour's Faith Envoy

The Government wants to lift restrictions on Sunday trading during the Olympic Games. The plans have been criticised by the Labour Party, trade unions, small shop keepers and *"Keep Sunday Special"*. There are fears this *"temporary"* change could become permanent – as some have long wished.

The current law was agreed after Mrs Thatcher's Government tried to deregulate Sunday trading, and was defeated in Parliament. Large stores—those with more than 280 square metres of shop floor space—are allowed to open on Sundays between 10 am and 6 pm, for not more than six hours. At the Budget, George Osborne announced emergency legislation to allow large stores to trade for longer during the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Chancellor has rightly been criticised for failing to deliver economic growth. It's understandable that he wants to maximise the economic benefits of the Olympic Games. There is a case for giving big shops the opportunity to open for longer when so many overseas visitors will be in London.

But it isn't a change which should be made lightly. I am uneasy that emergency legislation is being used to railroad the change through. There has been no consultation, nor discussion with the trade unions whose members would have to work the extra hours.

Representing small shops, the Association of Convenience Stores said it *"vehemently opposes any change to Sunday trading legislation for the Olympics as this sets a dangerous precedent for long term reform to Sunday Trading hours, which are vital to local shops."*

Reports from Downing Street suggest this temporary change is an experiment, to assess the viability of de-regulating Sunday trading permanently. Foreign Secretary William Hague said the Government would analyse the effects of the extended trading hours *"before coming to any wider conclusions."*

I oppose extended Sunday trading. The Government once described itself as the most *"family friendly"* in Europe, but extended Sunday trading would harm many families. Already, over a million UK families have at least one parent working on both weekend days, so they have little time to spend together when children are not at school.

A consultation last year concluded that most people do not want longer trading hours on a Sunday. I hope the current restrictions will stay in place, to protect families and employees, and to maintain at least some distinctiveness for Sunday.



MP praises work of Christian charity in Sheffield

David Blunkett, the Labour MP for Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough, has praised the work of a Christian charity in Sheffield which is providing training and volunteering opportunities to the unemployed.

The Rainbow's End Project, which is based in one of the most deprived areas of the country, works with asylum seekers and refugees, helping them make a positive contribution to society through volunteering. The charity also provides training for people who are finding it difficult to get back into work.

Rainbow's End was set up in 2008 by Yvonne Hayes who works for Church Army, a charity that has more than three hundred evangelists based in the UK and Ireland. At a recent awards ceremony, David Blunkett met with Yvonne and presented certificates to some of the volunteers. Speaking afterwards, David said: *"Yvonne is a star: leading the volunteers, running Rainbow's End and making this a critical part – in fact, the heart of – community action."*

Rainbow's End has thirty six volunteers and is currently looking to buy an additional building. This will allow the charity to develop further vocational training opportunities and create a quiet space where people



David Blunkett MP presenting an award to Yvonne Hayes can reflect and relax. Regular community events are also held at the charity's shop—where some of the volunteers work. For example, during the summer a Beach Week took place where people shared their stories from around the world.

Mark Russell, the Chief Executive of Church Army, said: *"Rainbow's End is making such a remarkable difference to the lives of people in Burngreave, practically, emotionally and spiritually. Here at Church Army our evangelists are committed to communities for the long-term and want to share their faith through words and action."*

News in brief

Ed Miliband appoints new Chief of Staff

Ed Miliband has appointed Tim Livesy as his new Chief of Staff. Until recently Tim was an advisor to the Archbishop of Canterbury and, before that, to Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor when he was Archbishop of Westminster. Tim has also worked in the Foreign Office and 10 Downing Street. Speaking about the appointment, Ed said: *"Tim has a wealth of knowledge and experience of Whitehall and Westminster. He is also someone who brings deep values and commitment to making Britain a fairer, more just country."* Tim said he was *"delighted"* to be given this opportunity to work with Ed and his team.

Labour launches weekly DFID newsletter

Labour's Shadow DFID team has launched a new fortnightly newsletter. Shadow Secretary of State for International Development, Ivan Lewis MP said: *"As a front bench team we want to keep people informed about how we are pressing the Government to keep to its promises to the developing world. Our newsletter serves as a regular fortnightly update allowing us to stay in touch with all of those in the Labour movement and beyond who believe in global social justice and equality."* To subscribe to the newsletter, then please email shadowdfidteam@gmail.com.

Ed Miliband leads tributes to Archbishop Williams

Ed Miliband has paid tribute to the Archbishop of Canterbury after it was announced that he would be standing down from his position as leader of the Church of England at the end of the year to become Master at Magdalene College, Cambridge. Leading the tributes, Ed said: *"Rowan Williams rightly is held in the greatest respect nationally and internationally. He has been an outstanding leader of the church in England and in the wider Anglican Communion in challenging times. He has friends on every continent, and has played a vital role in building friendships across faiths and denominations."*

Tax credits 'bombshell'

Over 200,000 couples with children in part-time work are set to lose around £4,000 a year from this April, according to figures uncovered by Labour. A little-noticed change to tax credit rules means thousands of families on low incomes will lose all of their working tax credits unless they can significantly increase their working hours. Responding to the figures Labour's Shadow Chief Secretary, Rachel Reeves MP said: *"This is a deeply unfair change from a Government that is increasingly out of touch with parents feeling the squeeze and struggling to juggle work and family life."*

Witnessing the human face of development

Earlier this year I visited Tanzania as a guest of ActionAid. Tanzania is a country which over the past decade has made significant progress, benefiting from long-term stability and positive year on year growth. Major advances have been made in relation to education and health. However, income inequality remains stark and for too many, poverty is a daily reality.

During my time in Tanzania, I stayed with a family of twelve. They lived alongside a small agricultural landholding which they farmed but didn't own. I slept in a cramped mud hut which is their home and used a toilet which while spotlessly clean was no more than a hole in the ground. When darkness fell the only form of light was from the moon and stars and our torches. Despite these monumental challenges their charity and optimism was inspiring as was their strength of dignity, order, mutual respect and love.

So, what are the development policy challenges which a snapshot of the daily realities facing this family and my later visit to a women's cooperative raise? Some challenges are specific to Tanzania, others are relevant to many developing countries.

First, on land there is too often no clarity about ownership rights. This prevents assets being accumulated; leaves vulnerable people exposed to exploitation; and can lead to some more undesirable companies taking advantage of weak land tenure to acquire large tracts of communities' land. My hosts had no right of tenure and could technically have been evicted at any time.

There is also a pressing need for a global rethink on the role of biofuels. Some of the less scrupulous firms entering the market, sadly some of them British, have exploited local workers, failed to pay adequate levels of compensation for land and haven't built promised



community facilities. There is an understandable anger in local communities, and a deep distrust of Britain.

However, one of the greatest challenges is how developing countries can achieve universal access to primary education especially in fragile and conflict states while enhancing the quality of teaching and learning to support more young people to stay on and progress into secondary, further and higher education. Over time, I want to stimulate a debate about why we don't apply our understanding that early intervention in the first five years of a child's life makes the most difference to our policies in the developing world.

After visiting Tanzania, my world will never quite be the same again. Amid statistics, summits and speeches, the human face is too often the last not first thing on the agenda. For me the prism through which I will look at these issues has changed forever. At the beginning of the 21st century we can't continue to tolerate this level of gross inequality. Can we? To reverse a famous political slogan, "No we can't!"

Ivan Lewis is the Member of Parliament for Bury South

We want to hear from you

More than ever before, the Labour Party is committed to listening to and learning from those of religious faith—including those in our churches. We realise that many of you cannot commit to supporting any particular political party. Even so, we are interested to hear what you have to say, and to help you to continue your valuable work across the country.

There are a few things you can do to help us in this work.

- 1. Tell your friends about this newsletter.** We want to be in dialogue with as many people of faith as possible. Encourage others to join our mailing list at www.labour.org.uk/faith.
- 2. Ask to display this newsletter in your church.** Ask your church leaders if they are willing for this newsletter to be displayed so that others in your church can read about what Labour is doing.
- 3. Tell us how we can help you.** Write to Stephen Timms MP (Faith Envoy), c/o The Labour Party, 39 Victoria Street, London, SW1H 0HA. Alternatively, email stephen@stephentimms.org.uk.

To join the Labour Party visit www.labour.org.uk/join or telephone us on 08705 900 200.