

For Whom the Bell Tolls? It's us again the working class

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Phew... what a relief the House of Lords have recently stepped in and saved us from George Osborne's attack upon those hard working families that all political parties like to tell us are out there. Not shirkers but the strivers – those who are working hard for their families. If we were to play Party Political Bingo (as I often do) 'hard working families' is dobbed, and 'doing the right thing' is double dobbed. It was the outcry from MPs on all sides of the House, charities, and then the House of Lords ('the other place' which is not usually known for its support of British working class people) that forced the Chancellor of the Exchequer to undertake an incredible U turn and end his plans (for now) to take his austere axe on tax credits for those hard working families. After all, one nation conservatism is at the vanguard of the moral authority, ensuring those *hard working families* are rewarded for *doing the right thing*.

Luckily we had the House of Lords to remind them of that, but who now is reminding them that without a safe and secure home, and knowing that you can put down roots for your family, and that your children can stay at the same school for more than a year, life for millions of people will become unbearable? Sadly being unable to make long term plans because of the precariousness of your housing situation, fear of your landlord, and terrified of the men in the yellow hats with the yellow tripod pitching up on your estate is a common experience now. Daring to dream that you can stay in the community where you have family, friends and support is becoming beyond the poorest families' imagination – the reality of the consequences of the poverty of hope. There is no doubt that housing, and the lack of homes for people who want to live in them is increasingly at the forefront of most peoples in minds in Britain today – whether you are living on a council estate, or in the suburbs.

The cost of having a safe and stable home is becoming untenable, both financially and emotionally. Being homeless makes you ill, as does the fear of homelessness. So as the Chancellor a few weeks ago reprieved the threat to tax credits and we learned that topping up poverty pay would fight another day, what many of us didn't hear is that social housing is now on death row. The housing situation that we know is already in crisis is about to become much worse. Looking closely at the banally named 'Housing and Planning Bill' which should be more appropriately named 'shock and awe' is truly terrifying. There is no provision or future plan for any social housing in Britain, unless you call dismantling, undermining, and flogging off all of our social housing. a plan. The Bill advocates selling off all 'high value property' that becomes vacant- we can say goodbye to all social housing in London, where a two bedroomed ex-council flat in Kensington recently sold for over a million pounds. There is also a change in regulations regarding 'high income social tenants' who may be liable to pay market rent, and the Bill insists that housing providers make provision for people with different incomes to pay different rents, in simple terms this is the means testing of social housing. But most worrying of all is that all of the regulations

relating to planning and housing can be defined, determined or overruled by the Secretary of State.

The new Shock and Awe bill for social housing is not only unfair, damaging, and frankly cruel, it also a method of de-democratising our local communities. The final reading for this legislation that truly sounds the alarm of class war is on the 5th January 2016. I doubt we can stop it. Lets look forward to 2016, homelessness, sub-prime mortgages, children constantly moving from home to home, and evictions.

Happy New Year

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