

HOUSING EMERGENCY MASS LOBBY OF PARLIAMENT 15 FEBRUARY 2011



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WE PROTEST

“Government policies will result in new tenants being penalised and communities becoming ghettoised. Rather than slashing the budget for new housing by 70 per cent the Government should be investing in new council housing to reduce waiting lists and help to get skilled construction workers back to work.”
Alan Ritchie, General Secretary of construction union UCATT

“In many parts of the country it is already impossible for disabled people to get social housing due to the very severe shortage of accessible properties. Proposed changes to Local Housing Allowance will lead to disabled people being trapped in either much more expensive nursing homes or other inadequate and unsuitable homes. To seek to remove full Housing Benefit from anyone who is unemployed for over 12 months when unemployment is rising rapidly will simply fuel homelessness for all claimant groups and can only be considered absurd behaviour on the part of the Coalition government.”
Linda Burnip, Disabled People Against Cuts

“The coalition government is trampling under foot the security and wellbeing of council housing tenants in an ideological blitz to implement Thatcher’s unfinished business. Tenants will be squeezed out of high cost areas as rents are pushed up to market rates and as housing benefits are cut. Also at stake is the very essence of what we value, security that we can stay in our home through thick and thin. This ‘Cathy Come Home’ package is a disaster and challenges any claim that this government is ‘fair’.”
Gail Cartmail, Assistant General Secretary UNITE

“Cuts in welfare and housing benefits and rising unemployment mean more people will become homeless. Cathy will still be on the street but with Cameron’s malicious attack in her ears – does her ‘behaviour’ deserve our assistance?
Working people who have strength through their organisations should act together to defend those, like the homeless, who need our support. And solidarity means more than days of action and passing the hat round. It means a serious struggle to reverse this vicious onslaught.”
Ken Loach, Film Director, ‘Cathy Come Home’

“The Coalition government is engaged in an act of pure vandalism on social housing and tenants. Tenants will face the spectre of homelessness and insecure housing once more as ‘insecure tenancies’ and ‘nearly market rents’ eat into the fabric of social housing. UNISON will stand together with all those campaigning for that basic human right – a decent home, at a decent cost.”
Heather Wakefield, Unison National Secretary, Local Government

“The TUC is glad to support this campaign against the government’s attack on social housing and housing benefit. The solution to the UK’s housing crisis is to build new homes – now more than ever it’s time for the government to wake up to the devastating affects these cuts are having and start to invest in council and other rented housing.”
Brendan Barber, TUC General Secretary

“Tenants will not tolerate these attacks on our rights. There are five million of us, and our families – united we can stop them. Demand MPs and Councillors act now: protect secure tenancies and low rents, stop the robbery and invest in the homes we need: decent, affordable, secure and accountable.”
Eileen Short, Defend Council Housing

Before the election David Cameron said ‘We support social housing, we will protect it, and we respect social tenants’ rights.’ The Conservatives said the party had ‘no policy to change the current or future security of tenure of tenants in social housing’. *Inside Housing*, 30 April 2010

Government proposals to cut housing benefit, force rents up to 80% of market levels, and remove security of tenure for new tenants will increase fear and insecurity, rent arrears, evictions and homelessness. These policies do nothing to reduce high rents, nor do they build the secure, genuinely affordable homes for rent we need, with five million already on housing waiting lists.

Ministers want to drive people into insecure, expensive private renting and destroy the principles of public housing. We want secure and stable mixed communities – not poverty traps and transit camps.

Hands off our tenancies, our homes and our benefits.

PROGRAMME

12 noon Opening rally

With speakers including:
Clive Betts MP; Caroline Lucas MP; Councillor Catherine West Leader Islington Council; Jackie Peacock, Brent Private Tenants; Councillor Kieran Thorpe, Welwyn Hatfield; Linda Burnip, Disabled People Against Cuts; Linda McNeil, Leeds Tenants Federation; Alastair Murray Housing Justice; Mark Serwotka, PCS General Secretary; Wilf Flynn, Building Union UCATT; Dot Gibson, National Pensioners Convention; National Tenant Council member; Right to Work Campaign; Eileen Short, Defend Council Housing

2pm Workshops

- **What to say to your MP – our case**
Alex Kennedy, Crisis and Peter O’Kane, retired Assistant Director Housing
- **Is it Legal? Standing up for our rights**
Liz Davies Housing Law Practitioners Association and Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers
- **Effective local campaign**
Leeds Tenants Federation and Housing Justice/ London Coalition Against Poverty
- **Our Alternative – money’s there to invest in homes and services**
PCS and DCH

3.30pm Closing rally

Bob Russell MP, Frank Dobson MP and tenants

Protest outside Parliament – bring your placards, banners and boxes

Together we can defeat this attack. We need to get organised to wake up MPs and Councillors to the havoc these policies will cause and our determination to stop them.

Tenants present and future, public and private, council and RSL, with trade unions, councillors and MPs, housing and disability campaigners and others, can create a formidable mass, united opposition.

Tenants are not second class citizens. Ordinary people fought for every right we have today, to escape the slums, insecurity and fear of private landlords. We won secure tenancies in 1980 – under a Conservative Government. We have resisted privatisation and forced councils, MPs and landlords to listen.

Now we have to organise nationally and locally to defeat these attacks and demand investment in council and other housing to meet the growing Housing Emergency.

What next?

- Get your MP to sign EDM 1389 [see below]
Ask them to attend the Localism Bill third reading debate, speak against fixed-term tenancies and vote to support our amendment
- Local Action
Link up with other tenants groups, trade unions and campaigners
Organise letters to local papers, leafleting and a public meeting
Take a petition and deputation to your local Council for a commitment:
 - not to use fixed-term tenancies
 - to oppose up to 80% market rents
 - not to evict tenants in arrears due to housing benefit cuts
 - to oppose any loss of council and other genuinely affordable rented housing
 - to call on other landlords to do the same
- Join us in a united campaign for investment in new and improved council and other rented housing
- Call on local housing association landlords to consult tenants properly with meetings to discuss the proposals, and argue in these to oppose the changes.
- Ask local election candidates if they support these commitments. Publish their answers: local media may report this - ask them in advance
- Join the tenants section on 26 March giant TUC march – bring banners and posters to a Housing Emergency rallying point. Unite to defend all our public rights and services
- Support Housing Emergency – add your organisation to the list of supporters. Planning meeting 5pm, 8th March, Parliament

EDM 1389 SECURE TENANCIES, LEVELS OF RENT AND HOUSING BENEFITS 01.02.2011. Mitchell, Austin

“That this House is concerned that proposals for new fixed-term tenancies for council and housing association tenants, and up to 80 per cent. of market rents for new housing association lettings, combined with cuts in housing benefit rates exclude claimants from high-rent areas in towns, cities and rural

areas, will lead to increased rent arrears, evictions and homelessness; is further concerned that while new high rents will drive up housing benefit costs, the proposals will fail to regulate high private rents and not build any of the secure, genuinely-affordable homes for rent needed by the five million on

housing waiting lists and others who will be priced out of the unaffordable and insecure private rental and mortgage market; welcomes the Housing Emergency lobby of Parliament on 15 February 2011 demanding that the Government cap rents rather than housing benefit, drop attacks on secure

tenancies and proposed means testing of future tenants and stop evictions which will come from cuts in housing benefit; opposes proposals for social rents of up to 80 per cent. market rents; and calls on the Government to build new and improved secure, low rent, accountable council and other housing.”

HOUSING EMERGENCY is bringing together organisations and individuals to oppose attacks on Housing Benefit, rents and secure tenancies, and for investment in new and improved council and affordable secure rented homes

- Supporters include: House of Commons Council Housing Group, Defend Council Housing, TUC, trade unions Unite, PCS, GMB, UNISON, UCATT, PCS, South East Region TUC, Barking & Dagenham Council, Islington Council, Leeds Tenants Federation, Tower Hamlets Tenants Federation, Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations; London Coalition Against Poverty, Right to Work Campaign, Labour Representation Committee, Disabled People Against Cuts, National Tenants Council members
- Further information: Mitchellav@parliament.uk or eileenshort@hotmail.com

HOUSING EMERGENCY

MASS LOBBY OF PARLIAMENT 15 FEBRUARY

12-4pm, Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, Storey's Gate, SW1H 9NH

- **Hands off secure tenancies – no means test**
- **Cap rents not benefits**
- **Oppose up to 80% market rents**
- **No evictions due to housing benefit cuts**
- **Build council and other housing for rent**

