

Slavery

I wholeheartedly condemn slavery. Today there is more work to be done to combat what is called modern slavery. There is not much specifically modern about the traffic in people who are bound to employers in low wage slavery in illegal occupations or working illegally because they did not gain legal entry to the country concerned. There is slavery and criminality behind the drug trades, the exploitation of some women and the passage of people illegally to new countries for the profit of the people traffickers. There is slavery in some illegal businesses employing illegal migrants and exploiting them over hours, pay and living conditions as they are outside the legal protections of our society. These are the slaveries we should oppose and prevent. These are the slaveries we can do something about. They are a blot on our generations.

Past slavery was horrific, but there is nothing we can do to ease the burdens or compensate the victims when they are long dead. Many past societies were slave based. The UK faced slavery and serfdom from the Romans, Normans, Barbary pirates and others, just as it worked with other countries to promote slave plantations in the eighteenth century. The UK turned from such practices with a successful anti slavery Parliament led campaign, helping the world to new standards of conduct. The Royal Navy played an important role in stopping the trade in people.

I do not expect compensation to be paid to the UK by those countries that invaded us, enslaved people, took their lands and abused them. Our attention should be on the present and future. There are too many current day abuses which we can do something about which should be our priority. We cannot put right the conduct of people who died hundreds of years ago which we condemn. Our ancestors fought against their enslavers at the time and lost. The Roman legions and Norman army were powerful oppressors. However much you want to change that you cannot.