

Referring the bid to a phase two inquiry by the CMA is the Government doing just the bare minimum – Watson

Tom Watson MP,
Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, commenting on Karen Bradley's statement on the Sky/Fox merger, said:

"There are no surprises in the statement today.

"Referring the bid to a phase two inquiry by the CMA is the Government doing just the bare minimum. If the Government now accepts further undertakings in lieu instead it will throw the integrity of this process into question.

"Ofcom's finding that the Murdochs remain fit and proper to hold a broadcasting licence, despite 'significant corporate failure' at Fox News, is disappointing. If the executives who ran a company involved in systematic and widespread criminality, including phone hacking and police bribery, can pass the fit and proper test, it begs the question – is the test itself fit for purpose?

"If Karen Bradley really wants the facts then part two of the Leveson Inquiry must go ahead to investigate the corporate governance failures that allowed the phone hacking scandal to take place.

"It's clear the rules need to be reviewed and the next Labour government will look again at the laws governing media ownership in this country.

"The General Election result last month shows the Murdoch media empire can no longer deliver Tory majorities. So the Government has nothing to lose. It must not let this bid proceed."

This inquiry must provide answers for the Grenfell Tower community – Healey

Responding

to the appointment of Sir Martin Moore-Bick as head of the public inquiry into

the Grenfell Tower fire, **John Healey MP, Labour's Shadow**

Secretary of State for Housing, said:

"This

inquiry must provide answers for the Grenfell Tower community, find out what has gone so badly wrong, and help ensure this tragedy is never repeated.

"Two

weeks on from the fire, trust is low in the community around Grenfell Tower so

it is vital that the inquiry gains the trust of Grenfell families and that their voices are heard throughout this process.

"Given

we do not know when this inquiry will be completed, it must not be used by the

government to delay making the urgent changes we already know are needed.

"We

do not need a public inquiry to tell us that tower block residents need a commitment to up-front funding for necessary remedial work, including re-cladding and retrofitting sprinklers starting with the highest-risk buildings. Ministers have failed to give this clear funding commitment, and they should do so now.

"We do not need a public inquiry to know that

our system of fire safety checks and controls is failing, and that an overhaul

of building regulations is urgently needed as was recommended to the government

in 2013 following the Lakanal House fire."

John McDonnell speech – Queen's Speech Debate

John

McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, speaking in the Queen's Speech

debate in the House
of Commons today, said:

***CHECK
AGAINST DELIVERY***

“Thank
you Mr Speaker,

I beg to
move the amendment in my name and that of my honourable and right honourable
colleagues.

I
have been in the House now for 20 years, never have we seen such a threadbare
scrap of a document as this Queens Speech.

Let’s
be grateful for small mercies, it’s a pleasure to note what has not been
mentioned in this vacuous notelet.

Despite
being promised in the Conservative manifesto, we have heard no plans for
legislation to end the triple lock.

We
have heard nothing about legislation to end winter fuel payments.

We
have heard no legislative plans for the so-called dementia tax.

Nothing
of the policy to take food from the mouths of infants and younger primary
school children.

Even the
flagship grammar schools policy seems to have been ditched from the Queen’s
Speech.

I
want to thank the millions of voters who rejected the Conservatives, they
have
been prevented the Tories from implementing in full the cuts they promised.

Instead
the Government has been reduced to a grubby back-room deal and pork barrel
politics in an attempt to cling onto office.

The
result is that we have a Queen’s Speech devoid of content which offers no
solutions to the pressing issues facing Britain today.

The

Queen's Speech says, and I quote,

"My ministers will strengthen the economy so that it supports the creation of jobs"

The reality Mr Speaker, is that we are witnessing, to quote the Governor of the Bank of England, the weakest UK business investment in half a century.

The growth of insecure, low paid, low skilled jobs. 1 million on zero hours contracts.

The Queens Speech promises to "invest in the NHS, schools and other public services".

The reality is that this couldn't be further from the truth.

Spending per pupil remains set to fall.

Police officers, firefighters and border guards will be cut.

And the NHS, already at breaking point, has been promised no new money.

Not our words Mr Speaker but those of the British Medical Association.

The Chancellor has, in various interviews, bemoaned the fact that he was hidden away during the election campaign and that his record on the economy was not the central plank of the Conservatives' campaign.

I agree.

I wish he had been more to the fore in the campaign and his record more widely exposed.

Because if it had been, Labour would be in government now.

I don't believe that, so far, the Rt Hon gentlemen has been afforded his proper place in history.

For those Hon Members who were not in this place 8 years ago, let me explain that the Chancellor was, prior to 2010, the Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

And as an ardent neo-liberal, the Chancellor, in his role as Chief Secretary, was the Architect of Austerity.

It was he who designed the detail of the economic programme rolled out by his mentor George Osborne after 2010.

He has been at the heart of the Austerity cabinet throughout this period.

He should not hide his light under a bushel.

In his recent Mansion House speech he referred to his Government's record as, "a record of which we are proud".

The foundation of the chancellor's record is his adherence to neo-liberalism – trickle-down economics.

A theory which argues that, if you cut taxes for the rich and for corporations, and turn a blind eye to tax avoidance and tax evasion, then somehow this wealth will somehow trickle down to the rest of society.

The Chancellor has certainly adhered to tax cuts for the rich and for corporations.

Corporation tax, capital gains tax, Inheritance Tax and the Bank levy have all been slashed.

Independent analysis demonstrates that OBR costings of tax cuts introduced by the Conservatives on these four measures alone since 2010 will have cost tax payers over £70bn between last year and the end of this Parliament.

The corporation tax cuts were meant to lead to a large scale increase in Business investment in our economy.

But last year business investment fell for the first time since 2009 and remains lower than in the rest of the G7, with the exception of Italy.

Corporations are now sitting on £580 billion of earned income that they are not investing.

Some have
been exposed as being involved in share buy-backs to boost performance
statistics and bonuses.

Seven
years of Tory austerity have done nothing to address the grotesque and
widening
levels of wealth inequality in the UK.

A report
last year by Credit Suisse found that the richest 1% of people in the UK now
own almost a quarter of the country's wealth.

The
Sunday Times Rich List told us that the richest 1000 families in the UK had
more than doubled their wealth since the financial crash.

This is
the record of which the Chancellor is so proud.

Let's
measure the impact of this record on the rest of society.

It's
important we do because this Queen's speech promises just more of the same.

This
could have been the Queens Speech that ended austerity once and for all. It
certainly doesn't.

Is it a
matter of pride for the Chancellor that nearly one and a quarter million food
parcels were handed out by food banks last year?

Are we to
be proud of a government that can't feed its people?

How can
anyone be proud that over 77,000 households were in temporary accommodation
this year- an almost 8% increase on last year?

Rough
sleeping has increased by 134% since this Government came to power.

There are
1.2 million households on the housing waiting lists.

Nearly
70,000 children are being brought up in temporary accommodation whilst house
building has fallen to its lowest level since the 1920s?

Are we to
be proud that we have a government that can't adequately house its

population?

Is it a proud
record that four million children are trapped in poverty in our country?

Two
thirds of these children are in working families.

And it's
not just children.

The
latest figures show that 14 million people are living in poverty in the UK.

This includes
nearly two million pensioners – the very people the Conservatives were going
to
hit with ending the triple lock, means testing winter fuel payments and
introducing a dementia tax.

Over 80%
of the austerity measures have fallen on women.

But some
of the hardest hit have been disabled people.

According
the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, almost half of those in poverty are disabled
or
live in a household with a disabled person.

The
brutality of the Work Capability Assessment has been associated with over 590
suicides.

Is it a
record to be proud of that his cap on public sector pay has contributed to
wages falling by 10% since 2008?

We have
witnessed the longest fall in wages on record.

Nearly
six million people earn less than the living wage.

People
were shocked when the RCN revealed nurses pay had fallen by 14%, forcing some
nurses to rely on foodbanks.

Is it
something to be proud of that the UK is the only major developed country that
has seen economic growth but falling wages?

Yesterday

we had the chaos of mixed messages coming out from Number 10 and the Treasury over hints that the pay cap was to be scrapped.

Last

night the coalition of the Tories and the DUP voted down our motion to support

public sector workers securing a fair pay rise.

Ministers

have been quick to praise the devotion and bravery of our emergency services in

the aftermath of the tragedies we have seen in recent weeks.

But last

night they could not extend that generosity to give those men and women that put their lives on the line to keep us safe, a pay rise.

The

proper governance of this country is being undermined by the disputes between the PM and the Chancellor.

Let's

look at the desperate state of our public services.

How can

anyone take pride in:

Spending

per pupil set to fall by 8% between 2015-16 and 2019-20

Over

46,000 children's operations have been cancelled over the last four years

Police

numbers have been cut by 20,000 since 2010

Firefighter

posts have been cut by 10,000 since 2010

20,000

soldiers cut from 2010.

So we

have a government that can't feed our people, can't house our people or protect

our children and older people from poverty.

It cannot

ensure that when people go to work they earn enough to live on.

And it

can't maintain our basic public services.

That's a government that doesn't deserve to remain in office.

All this suffering by ordinary people under austerity to protect the rich and the corporations has been for what?

On the government's own metrics it has significantly failed.

They promised that the deficit would be eradicated in five years- now it will be 15 years at best.

They have added £700 billion to the national debt, leaving £1.7 trillion of debt for future generations.

In the first quarter of this year growth has fallen to 0.2% while inflation has increased to 2.9% – below wage growth.

Last year saw the slowest rate of business investment since 2009.

Wages are lower today than when the Tories took office in 2010.

Unsecured debt per household will reach a record high this year.

It's not just the Labour Party that is highlighting the consequences of the Tories' failed economic approach.

Last week, the Governor of the Bank of England warned of "weaker real income growth".

He spoke about "markedly weak investment" and "rapid consumer credit growth".

And worryingly he warned that "the extent to which the UK's [current account] deficit has moved closer to sustainability remains an open question", as we continue to rely on the "kindness of strangers" to fund us.

The Bank's Chief Economist said last week that 7 per cent of the entire workforce could be on zero-hours contracts in a decade.

The

Director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies has called the lost wage growth in this country “completely unprecedented”.

The IFS have also referred to the “unacknowledged risks to the quality of public services” under the Conservatives, and judge that their austerity plans would be so harsh as to potentially be undeliverable.

A Queen’s speech which is devoid of any serious measures to address the economic challenges facing this country and the pressures ordinary people and our public services are under.

Austerity continues to impact on our schools, health services, emergency services and peoples living standards.

In the Autumn Budget, it will be interesting to see how the Chancellor covers the black hole derived from his last disastrous budget. At least £2bn we are aware of and according to some commentators growing to anything up to £7bn.

In particular it would be helpful if the Chancellor explained today how he covers the cost of the £1bn grubby bribe to the DUP to keep his party clinging onto office.

£100m a vote the cost of the deal.

If I were a Tory backbencher I would start to negotiate now for a slice of that action.

After the miraculous discovery of funds for the DUP deal I don’t expect to hear much more about magic money trees from the other side.

£1bn found for the DUP but nothing to address the fundamentals of our weak and precarious economy which is now faced with the challenges of BREXIT.

Increasingly people are waking up to the fact that a government lacking a strong and stable leadership is incapable of securing a deal which protects our jobs and economy.

Divisions at the top of Government, a Cabinet divided.

Rows

between members of the Government's negotiating team are breaking out on a daily basis as they position themselves for their own leadership challenges.

As a

result we witness weekly changes of direction in the Government's own negotiating stance.

That

includes even changes in direction by the Chancellor.

Only

weeks ago he was threatening no deal – walking away to set the UK up as a tax haven off the coast of continental Europe.

Now it is

reported he is potentially looking to the customs union and a long and uncertain transition period.

Only

months ago he went along with the Government prioritising immigration control over the protection of jobs and the economy. Now he claims to want a jobs first BREXIT.

All this,

the failed and deeply unpopular austerity programme, the deeply divided rudderless cabinet and the directionless Brexit negotiating strategy, a content-less Queen's speech surely confirm it is time for this government to go.

It's time

for change.

As the

Labour Party demonstrated during the general election campaign: there is an alternative.

We can

address the deep-rooted problems our economy faces.

The

Labour Party has forged ahead with a serious, credible alternative to the Governments failed approach.

Our

society can afford decent public services.

We are

the fifth largest economy in the world.

If we

have a fair tax system, we can end the cuts in schools budgets.

We can
end the horrific sight of children sleeping on chairs in hospital corridors.

We can
end the bedroom tax and the punitive benefits sanctions regimes.

And we
can do that – as confirmed by the IFS – while remaining on target to
eliminate
the budget deficit in accordance with our Fiscal Credibility Rule.

But it's
not just about a fairer tax system: we need a government to invest what's
needed to secure our future.

Not the
derisory numbers floated by the Chancellor in the Autumn Statement with so
little to back them up.

A
serious, long-term vision of the economy which tackles the regional
disparities
and the changes taking place in the labour market.

A
commitment to drive up productivity by increasing investment – as demanded by
the CBI and many others – and delivering a serious industrial strategy.

It's a
transformative programme we look forward to implementing in Government.

This
Queen's Speech does nothing to solve our problems.

It
confirms a Government isolated from the real world in which our people live.

Labour's
amendment today sets out the alternative our country so desperately needs.

I urge
all Honourable members to support the amendment."

**Press release: PM meetings with EU
leaders ahead of G20 summit: 29 June**

2017

The Prime Minister held bilateral talks with Chancellor Merkel today in Berlin ahead of a meeting with EU leaders to prepare next week's G20 summit in Hamburg.

The Prime Minister said the UK was fully supportive of Germany's G20 presidency, and would work to ensure meaningful progress at the summit in key areas including counter-terrorism.

They discussed Brexit, welcoming the constructive start to the negotiations and agreeing it was important that the rights of citizens was the first issue to be discussed.

They agreed on the need to work even more closely together to counter threats to European security, including countering Russia's destabilising external interference in Europe's neighbouring regions such as the Western Balkans, and encouraging swift implementation of the Minsk Accords in Ukraine.

After her bilateral meeting with Chancellor Merkel, the Prime Minister's talks with EU leaders covered a range of topics due to be discussed at the G20 summit, including counter-terrorism, trade, and climate change.

On counter-terrorism, the Prime Minister made the point that the international community must come together and do more to counter terrorism and extremism, which is a shared threat facing us all. She said we needed to see continued progress in tackling online radicalisation, building on the agreements reached at the G7 summit.

On trade, the Prime Minister made the point that the UK is a powerful advocate for free trade and the World Trade Organisation, and a global economy that works for everyone. She said the international community must acknowledge that some people feel left behind by globalisation, and that not all countries are playing by the rules. The Prime Minister encouraged other leaders to take steps to make the international trading system work better, and also to ensure that all our citizens can share in the benefits of the global economy.

Finally, on climate change, the Prime Minister reiterated that the British government's commitment to the Paris Agreement and tackling global climate change is as strong as ever. We play a leading role internationally and are delivering on our commitments to create a safer, more prosperous future for us all. The Prime Minister confirmed that the UK will continue working closely with our partners on energy and climate change issues.

News story: Sir Alan Duncan opens seventh annual Chile Day in London

Chile Day's objective include strengthening ties between the City of London and representatives from Chilean capital markets

Minister of State for the Americas, the Rt Hon Sir Alan Duncan MP, opened the Chile Day event on Thursday with a speech that highlighted the strong UK-Chile relationship.

Chile Day is an event that promotes the Chilean financial market to a UK audience. It aims to strengthen ties between the representatives of Chilean capital markets and the City of London, and to showcase Chile as an investment destination and platform for funds across Latin America.

Sir Alan said:

I am delighted to be taking part in another successful Chile Day in London. The UK and Chile are linked by close historical ties and common values. We share a strong belief in the importance of free trade and globalisation, and the UK is an active observer at meetings of the Pacific Alliance of which Chile is a founding member.

Chile is a valued international partner, and we work together on a range of global challenges, including issues such as women's and LGBT rights, education and peace-keeping. Each year, Chile Day offers an opportunity for us to strengthen and deepen our relationship with Chile not just in trade, but in other areas such as science, innovation and good governance.

Notes for Editors:

- Chile Day is a collaboration between the Ministry of Finance for the Government of Chile, the British Embassy, the Embassy of Chile in London, InBest Chile and Pro Chile (the export promotion bureau of Chile).
- The Chile Day delegation was led by the Chilean Minister of Finance and the Chairman of the Chilean Central Bank, who was accompanied by around 400 top investors and businessmen.
- You can find out more about Chile Day [here](#).

- You can read Sir Alan Duncan's full Chile Day speech [here](#).

Further information