

Dawn Butler pre-Budget speech

Dawn

Butler MP, Labour's Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities, delivering a speech today in Central London, will say:

*****CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*****

Thank you colleagues for being here today.

In particular, the race organisations.

The Runnymede trust, race on the agenda and operation black vote.

And a special thanks to Runnymede and the Women's Budget Group for being the first organisations to look at intersectionality and compiling the analysis on the impact of austerity on gender, race and income.

This however will not be the first or last time I will reference your report.

I want to speak to you today on the need for action to challenge inequality in our economy and society ahead of the current chancellor Phillip Hammond's budget next week.

This October marked 30 years since black history month started and over the years growing up as a black women in the UK...I have personally suffered from racism and sexism but I have seen a lot of black history in the making.

– From the first 4 black MPs elected 30 years ago

– To my elevation as the UK's first black female minister in the House of Commons

-The passing of landmark equality legislation, by Labour governments.

A lot has happened over the last 30 years and in my time, I have seen report after report after report which paints the problem so well.

There's endemic structural and systematic racism in the work place.

Over representation of black people in the criminal justice system and under representation in public life.

African-Caribbean and Bangladeshi children failed by the education system.

And last month what did the government do?

An audit.

That was her big idea to bring all the data together... on a website.

Which tells us, shock horror, that discrimination and inequality is alive and kicking.

But I knew that and everyone in this room knew that.

In the words of Kehinde Andrews, professor of race and racism at Birmingham city university:

"Racial inequality is as British as a cup of tea, and if the government did not know the scale of the problem before the audit then we should dissolve it immediately on the grounds of incompetence".

He's right.

We need action not audits.

But the truth is...how can we expect action from a government whose policies are the problem?

The "burning injustice of inequality" the prime minister talks about has been exacerbated by her government's economic agenda. With every policy decision she adds fuel to the fire.

In 2010, George Osborne, once chancellor, now newspaper editor, (with no previous experience in that role I might add) unleashed a programme of spending cuts to the tune of £83 billion pounds.

In that same year, Theresa May said and I quote:

"There are real risks that women, ethnic minorities, disabled people and older people will be disproportionately affected by proposed cuts to public spending".

Well thanks for the warning.

Thanks for the audit to prove this warning true!

If only she was the prime minister and could stop this from happening.

I do wish the prime minister would stop patronising our communities by saying she cares about inequality on the one hand and on the other hand creating a society.

Where low income African Caribbean Asian and minority ethnic families have seen a 19% drop in living standards

Where black and Asian families will lose more in public services than white families.

Where women who look like me are more likely to be unemployed than our white counterparts.

And when they compete in the jobs market, often over qualified, are more likely to be in low paid and insecure work.

This government are dismantling all the pillars of society that make our country fairer.

Blocking avenues to challenge discrimination with the introduction of employment tribunal fees to the tune of £1200.

Since judged unlawful by the Supreme Court thanks to persistent campaigning of the trade union, unison. Forcing the government to payback these fees.

But much of the damage has been done. There has already been a stark and substantial fall in claims, and a culture of putting up with discrimination in the workplace is well established.

And when it comes to housing.

Race continues to play a key factor in how people live in Britain today.

There are stark inequalities in home ownership. The aspiration to own a home unattainable for far too many in our community.

While the tragedy of Grenfell tower is symbolic of this same systemic and institutional inequality.

The blaze follows years of neglect by the conservatives on social housing.

Just imagine the Tory council announcing a £10m upgrade – only on the outside so that it isn't an eye sore for the neighbours. But with no due regard for the care or safety of the residents inside.

Grenfell was home to many people with protected characteristics but they were not protected and we must ask ourselves why.

After seven long years, this government continues to pursue an economic agenda based on discrimination and inequality.

Demonstrated by acting without hesitation to slash our public sector.

But with trepidation to tackle industrial scale tax avoidance and evasion by the super-rich elite and big business.

And its African Caribbean and Asian women who pay the price.

Let me tell you... Phillip Hammond's budget next week will be no different.

More cuts.

More platitudes.

And no solutions.

Austerity is a failed tory party economic project, and has hit African Caribbean and Asian women the hardest.

New analysis released yesterday shows that because of their changes to universal credit low paid workers will be subject to an additional penalty with women and ethnic minorities hardest hit.

By April 2021, 5.9 million women living in households eligible for Universal Credit under 2013 rules will lose £4406, as a result of the combined impact of all changes to benefits, tax credits, universal credit, income tax, NICs and the National Living Wage introduced since June 2010. Black women, whether employed or not stand to lose £5030 a year

But I have a simple message today.

This country needs a government not afraid to highlight uncomfortable truths face uncomfortable truths and tackle the uncomfortable truths.

And yes, that means dealing with the issues of race and class in our economy.

If we are going to help build an economy for the many, not the few, then we must deal head on with race discrimination and economic inequality.

Labour is the party of equality and economic justice and

We will take action.

The burning injustices will drive our programme for government.

And we have acted already.

Taking a bold step in our race manifesto.

Committing the next Labour government to eliminate inequality in our economy

To do that we need at least three things.

First of all boost income, secondly deal with discrimination in the workplace, and thirdly ensure that our government and employers are held to account

Regarding income, we cannot expect to make breakthrough on economic inequality without recognising that BME groups have been hardest hit by tax and benefits changes and cuts to public services ... but also the stagnation of real wages.

People need and want the dignity that comes with decent wages.

Labour does not want a low wage economy

Britain needs a pay rise and only a Labour government can deliver one.

We will boost the income of African Caribbean and Asian communities by raising the statutory minimum wage to £10 per hour by 2020.

And on discrimination, as the McGregor-Smith and Parker reviews recently highlighted, if you are from a black and minority ethnic background, you will not progress at the same rate as our white counterparts.

That's why Labour will introduce equal pay

audit requirements for large companies.

And implement the Parker review recommendations to increase ethnic diversity on the board of Britain's biggest companies.

We won't stop there.

Labour will call time on name based discrimination.

Within the first 100 days of government we will launch an inquiry into name based employment discrimination and will roll out name-blind skills based recruitment practices, if necessary.

Finally on accountability

To ensure our government and employers are held to account

We will enhance the powers and functions of the equality and human rights commission, which has been subject to brutal cuts.

Grenfell was a watershed moment.

When you look at the names and faces of the "missing" and the dead from Grenfell it is clear that considerably vast majority are from our diverse communities.

The people that have suffered at the heart of these horrific events may have stopped searching for loved ones but they are still searching for answers.

And this government has a responsibility to give them answers.

There's thousands of people living in high rise buildings across the country who need solutions.

Well we have an answer.

Set aside funds in the budget on Wednesday to install sprinklers, make homes safe and save lives.

There can be no price too high to protect the most vulnerable in our society.

So I've got another demand, publish a comprehensive equality impact assessment of the budget.

And another one, pause the roll out of universal credit. It must not continue until its fundamental flaws are fixed. So no more people, and particularly African Caribbean and Asian families are made worse off.

Labour is a government in waiting...serious about eliminating inequality from our economy.

We believe in boosting the local economy to help the national economy

Not content with doing research and evidence gathering.

But taking action.

Economy – justice and a decent home is the cornerstone of a decent society.

Maya Angelou said – History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.

If the Tories have no courage to U-Turn on its unfair policies then I say to them, hand over the reins to the Labour Party. We have the courage to do just that.

Thank you very much.