

Illegal immigration and the Home Secretary

Tomorrow I read that the Home Secretary will provide another Statement to the Commons on migration matters. Parliament will only know for sure when the Speaker announces topical business at midday on Monday.

I assume she will reaffirm that no Minister wanted legally settled people who have been here a long time to be sent away, and will confirm that all actions are being taken to complete any outstanding paperwork quickly and helpfully in cases where proper documents have not been issued in past years. That is what we want and expect, as people welcomed into our country should not be put under pressure by the system or have their status placed in doubt. If anyone has been deported wrongly their cases should be reviewed and matters put right as best the government can.

I also trust she will stress as the Prime Minister rightly did last Wednesday the crucial distinction between legal and illegal migrants. Service has to be improved and any errors put right for legal arrivals, but the Home Secretary will presumably continue with her tougher policies towards illegals. Labour seems to wish to muddle this distinction.

The current Home Secretary agrees with the Prime Minister in wishing to reduce net inward migration to the tens of thousands, and is signed up to bringing that about. She issued a Home Office Annual Report for 2016-17 which she presumably approved which was crystal clear about the aim of reducing migration and the policy of removing illegal migrants. The Annual Report reminds us that that the government is committed to "Reducing annual net migration" and sets out how in that most recent year net migration had fallen by 84,000 or 25%.

It also states that a central aim is to "Clamp down on illegal immigration". Deporting foreign criminal offenders "remains a priority". "We continue to use the provisions of the Immigration Act 2014 and by December 2016 over 5700 foreign national offenders had been removed".

The Report continues with "The Home Office's approach to returns goes wider than criminal offenders. In January 2016 we broadened our engagement activity in priority countries to maximise returns of all nationals in the UK illegally". The Report also details numbers of people using the four Resettlement Schemes the Home Office promotes. The Report does not contain any individual targets beneath the general public target to cut net migration, but is peppered with numbers of how many people are involved in each of the detailed policies to try to implement the general target.

The Home Secretary will be expected to offer a robust defence of her approach, as well as updating us on how she is sorting out problems for those legally here. I also want to know when she is going to share with us the work she should be doing on a UK migration and borders policy for once we have left

the EU. It would be wise of her to correct again her slip over the Cabinet's long standing decision that we will be leaving the customs union when we leave the EU.