

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 Queen's 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 to 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."

**The Justice Secretary must deal with
the epidemic of violence, drugs,**

overcrowding and understaffing in our Prisons – Burgon

Richard

Burgon MP, Labour's Shadow Justice Secretary, commenting on Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons' report on Birmingham prison which is published tomorrow, said:

"As the evidence of the Conservative-created crisis in our prisons continues to mount, the Queen's Speech shows the Government has given up trying to sort out their mess.

"The Justice Secretary must deal with the epidemic of violence, drugs, overcrowding and understaffing, which was left to fester over the election campaign. To help get a grip of the situation, Labour would recruit 3,000 prisons officers."

Theresa May's reckless approach to our country's future will see a generation of young people losing out – Rayner

Angela Rayner MP,

Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Education, commenting on the Social Mobility Commission report, said:

"This report from the Government's own Social Mobility Commission shows that their policies will not improve social mobility in Britain.

"School budgets are being slashed, Sure Start Centres are being lost and there is nothing approaching a skills plan that will let us face the challenges of post-Brexit Britain.

"Theresa May's reckless approach to our country's future will see a generation of young people losing out. The next Labour government will ensure that wealth, power and opportunity

are enjoyed by the many not the few.”