

John McDonnell response to Philip Hammond's Mansion House speech

John McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, commenting on Philip Hammond's Mansion House speech this morning, said:

"The Chancellor has made clear this morning that the message remains the same – austerity will continue. The Tories have learnt nothing from the General Election, and the last seven wasted years of economic failure. The Conservatives have no understanding of the depth of suffering, stress and insecurity their long austerity regime has caused.

"And we have seen the Chancellor again trying to distance himself from the position of his Prime Minister on Brexit. It just shows further disarray at the top of government. The fact that there is clearly such a serious split between Number 10 and 11 is very worrying and only helps to undermine our country ahead of the Brexit negotiations.

"It further shows just how weak a position Theresa May is in. And raises the serious question of: how can she negotiate Brexit when her own Chancellor is so publicly disputing her position on Brexit and briefing against his own Cabinet colleagues?

"The truth is that the Government's spin of over a "hard" or soft "Brexit", is just a smokescreen to paper over the cracks of the divide at the very heart of this Tory Government. The reality is that they are really planning a Brexit for the few by turning our county into a tax haven off the coast of Europe, which diminishes workplace rights and undermines working people's living standards.

"Labour has called from day one for the Chancellor to act on gaining assurances over our stake in the EIB, and it has taken him a year to raise a finger; and now he has, all he is offering businesses in our country in way of support to mitigate any risks from the loss of this resource is a drop in the ocean from the actual support they will really need.

"Only a Labour Government will secure a Brexit for the many that will put jobs and the economy first, and

ensure that working families and small businesses are protected from any challenges our country faces after leaving the EU.”

[Jeremy Corbyn statement on van attack in Finsbury Park](#)

“I am shocked by this horrific and cruel attack in Finsbury Park, which is being treated as an act of terror.

“I offer my condolences to the family and friends of the man who has died, and our thoughts are with the people who have been injured, their family and friends.

“As the local MP, I have met with Muslim community leaders at the Muslim Welfare House alongside Islington Council Leader Richard Watts, the council’s Chief Executive Lesley Seary and the Metropolitan Police.

“Richard and I will attend prayers at Finsbury Park mosque later today.

“I appeal for people and the media to remain calm and respectful of those affected.

“In the meantime, I call on everyone to stand together against those who seek to divide us.”

[Letter from John McDonnell to Philip Hammond](#)

Today the Shadow Chancellor has written to Philip Hammond calling on him to make public the cost of any secret deals he has made with the DUP in order to prop up the Government in parliament.

Please find below the text of the letter sent today by John McDonnell to Philip Hammond:

Dear Chancellor,

I am writing to seek information on a specific element of the deal being discussed between the Prime Minister and representatives of the Democratic Unionist Party, which has emerged in the press.

It is reported that the DUP is seeking the ending of Air Passenger Duty levied on passengers at airports in Northern Ireland.

HMRC estimated the total revenue from APD in Northern Ireland in 2015/16 to be in the region of £90 million.

This figure is an estimate and may need adjustment to take into account further devolved matters.

However a revenue stream of this scale is significant and would pay for the equivalent of, for example, an additional 2000 firefighters.

I am writing to ask whether the Government has been asked for this measure by the DUP, has agreed to it or is considering it.

In the interest of basic openness and transparency in government I am writing to ask that you publish any financial measures that have been discussed with the DUP and set out the financial implications of any measures agreed with this party.

I look forward to a prompt response given the considerable public interest in this matter and its consequences on our public finances.

Yours sincerely,

John McDonnell MP

Shadow Chancellor

[John McDonnell calls on Tories to stop using EU before Brexit to aide tax avoidance](#)

John McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, calling on the Government not to block tax avoidance measures at the European Parliament following a vote last week when Tory MEPs voted to water down country-by-country reporting, said:

"Last week at the European Parliament Theresa May gave an insight into what a Tory Brexit will truly look like, as Tory MEPs voted to water down measures to clampdown on tax avoidance.

“Once again the Tories have shown their true colours on tax avoidance and evasion by voting to grant potentially permanent exemptions from scrutiny for large multinationals.

“Theresa May could have instructed her Tory MEPs to support public country-by-country reporting but has chosen not to; as she continues not to lead her party, but to be led by it.

“While the Tories say one thing on tax avoidance when they think the public is listening, they do another when they think no one is watching. Because deep down they really just want to turn our country into a tax haven off the coast of Europe.

“The Tories need to commit to stop using the European Parliament as a vehicle to block or hold up measures to clamp down on tax avoidance and evasion.

“Only a Labour Government would be prepared to work with our European neighbours in clamping down on tax evasion and avoidance, and introduce our Tax Transparency Enforcement Programme that would end the injustice where a few big corporations in our country are paying lower rates of tax than many of their employees.”

[Jeremy Corbyn letter to the Prime Minister regarding the independent public inquiry into the fire at Grenfell Tower](#)

Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party, has

today written to the Prime Minister regarding the decision to hold a full and independent public inquiry into the fire at Grenfell Tower.

Jeremy Corbyn said:

“Whilst the inquiry should be limited to the awful events at Grenfell Tower, it must be empowered to consider all the steps that were, or were not, taken leading up

to
and contributing to this most terrible incident. It must also identify the
urgent steps that need to be taken in relation to fire safety standards for
other buildings of this nature.

“In
addition to finding facts, the inquiry must be empowered to make
recommendations for the avoidance of any similar future disaster – and in so
doing, to consider recommendations arising from previous similar fire-related
deaths.”

The full text of the letter is
below.

Theresa
May

16 June 2017

The
Prime Minister

10
Downing Street

London

SW1A 2AA

Dear
Prime Minister,

I
am writing to note your decision to hold a full and independent public
inquiry
into the fire at Grenfell Tower and to seek your assurance that the inquiry
you
establish will be held under the provisions of the 2005 Inquiries Act.

On
the assumption that it is your intention to establish a 2005 Act Inquiry, I
want to share my view that it is vital that the Terms of Reference be drawn
with sufficient scope for the inquiry to establish all the relevant facts and
to ensure that all necessary lessons are learned. Whilst the inquiry should
be
limited to the awful events at Grenfell Tower, it must be empowered to
consider
all the steps that were, or were not, taken leading up to and contributing to
this most terrible incident. It must also identify the urgent steps that need
to be taken in relation to fire safety standards for other buildings of this
nature.

In

addition to finding facts, the inquiry must be empowered to make recommendations for the avoidance of any similar future disaster – and in so doing, to consider recommendations arising from previous similar fire-related deaths.

It is very important that the Terms of Reference are drawn with sufficient scope to require the participation of all those with a legitimate interest – this should undoubtedly include the bereaved families, survivors and also individuals and organisations with a legitimate interest such as the residents' campaign and representative organisations who were involved in the period leading up to these events. Their views and experiences are as important, if not more so, as the expert opinions of state actors and their service providing contractors.

I am also very concerned to ensure that this public inquiry is not used to delay any parallel actions which might be taken by interested parties. It is important that justice is served in as comprehensive and timely way possible. This must include, of course, ensuring that legal funding is available to support those involved in the inquiry and any inquests. I would also like to support the request of the Mayor of London for an interim report to be produced which I believe is important for the community to feel as if justice is being done in a timely manner.

Whilst I believe that the policies and priorities of your government in the arenas of social housing and public safety are legitimate targets for my criticism, I hope we both share a determination to discover the truths underpinning this tragedy so to avoid any repetition. For these reasons, in support of my hope to publicly welcome your decision, I would appreciate early consultation on your government's proposed inquiry Terms of Reference.

In response to my question yesterday, the Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service made it very clear that survivors made homeless would be appropriately and locally rehoused. This is imperative in order that they be enabled to re-build their lives and have some hope of recovery from these devastating events. It now appears that the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea may not be as committed to ensuring that all are re-housed locally. Your public re-commitment to this is imperative as part of an unequivocal, wider statement that the government will do all it can to provide timely practical support to those who have suffered so much. In this context, I note the announcement of the first government investment of £5million. Given the magnitude and scale of the crisis, this will clearly not be sufficient and I therefore await information regarding further funding plans.

On

a related matter, I believe that an attitude of generosity and compassion in relation to the costs of funeral expenses and ensuring that it is possible for families living outside the UK to travel here to attend funerals, as well as participate in the inquiry, is also warranted in such a tragic situation. This is particularly the case given the circumstances of many of the Grenfell Tower residents, including the number of bereaved families who may be resident overseas and the costs of burial and cremation. As was also raised at yesterday's brief discussion in the Grand Committee, I would expect that the Home Office guarantees the replacement, as a matter of urgent priority, of all documentation for those affected.

Finally, on behalf of all those in the Labour Party, may I express our admiration for those in the emergency services who responded with the utmost courage and professionalism and share our deepest sorrow at these harrowing events – and commit that we will do all in our power to ensure that this be the last such tragedy of its kind in our country.

Yours
sincerely,

Jeremy
Corbyn