

Labour for Independence

The voice of real Scottish Labour

Yesterday it was revealed that Labour MSPs voted against making funding available to those most affected by the 'Bedroom Tax'.

A proposal was put before the 'Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee' on the Scottish Government's draft budget to transfer funding from the Home Energy Efficiency Programme and other budget savings to provide an additional £20 Million of funding for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and thereby helping to alleviate the suffering of those affected most by the hated 'Bedroom Tax'.

However it has become apparent that two Labour MSPs on the committee (Margaret McDougall and Hanzala Malik) voted against the proposal..... Against freeing up funding that Labour had previously called for.

Could it be argued that they voted against the funding proposal because it was funding for £20 million and not the £53 million that Labour initially called for? An all or nothing gamble with people's lives and livelihoods?

Or, could it simply be more entrenched tribalism for the sake of it, all at the continued detriment of the electorate?

Either way this is a shocking development, people's lives, dependency and dignity should not be left at the hands of one-upmanship and political point scoring, Scotland needs its politicians to work together for the people. Party political tribalism, as has often been shown, will only drive those affected further into poverty and hardship.

Margaret McDougall and Hanzala Malik, as Labour Party representatives and public servants, elected by the very people affected by this criminal 'tax', should be ashamed of their actions today.

On the 30th of June this year Labour For Independence called on the Labour Party leadership to "...commit to the repeal of this awful tax." which we are happy to say they now have done. We also called on The Scottish Government, whilst not themselves the architects of this heinous tax, to "use the powers available to end the effects of this tax."

Whilst the £20 million in funding doesn't meet the full cost (estimated at £53 million) of mitigating the effect on the poorest & most vulnerable in our society, it is most certainly a large and welcome step in the right direction that will benefit thousands of Scots.

We had already asked in our statement of 30th of June that “The politicians who claim to oppose this ‘tax’ have a responsibility to stop using the ‘Bedroom Tax’ as a weapon against their political enemies and start working on actual solutions. The people deserve that much.” However, this ‘cutting off your nose’ attitude only serves to highlight how out of touch they are with the issues affecting those whom they serve. By refusing to accept the proposed budget transfer, which would divert £20 million in funding to DHP, they were in fact expressing preparedness to accept continued misery for many households, the majority of which are those already struggling the most at this difficult financial time.

Commenting, Allan Grogan, founder member of Labour for Independence said: “Such short sightedness needlessly enforces harder days ahead for some of the poorest in our society. The very people that the Labour Party was created to protect. While we believe mitigating the effects of the ‘Bedroom Tax’ should be fully funded to the £53 million mark, any effort to protect people from this despicable attack on the poor should be supported.”