



## ROBIN COOK CALLS FOR FAIRER DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH

Robin Cook used the End Child Poverty Annual Lecture to criticise the tax burden on the poor and call for the Government to take action to reverse the situation in which the poorest ten per cent of the population pay more in tax than the richest ten per cent.

Despite the Government's 'solid progress' in tackling child poverty, Cook claimed that the Britain had become less equal and its citizens less socially mobile. 'Children born in the 1970s have turned out to be less likely to rise in social class, or for that matter to be relegated in social class, than their parents born in the fifties,' he said. 'By contrast countries, like those of Scandinavia, with a more equal spread of income, have much higher rates of social mobility between classes.'

Arguing that those 'who preach equality of opportunity need also to practice equality of income distribution,' Cook said that the word redistribution has been deleted from the memory bank of New Labour's software.

'Perhaps we could be allowed to talk of redistribution of the tax burden. Upwards. Help to families in poverty would go much further if we adopted as policy that the poorest ten per cent should not pay more in tax than the richest ten per cent.'



Calling for a roadmap to the next child poverty target, Cook said his priorities were:

- Child Benefit to be uprated in line with earnings, not inflation
- The commitment to tackle child poverty mainstreamed across all public administration
- A decent minimum wage.

Cook said the Government did not need to deliver social justice by stealth. It should be proud of its achievements so far, in the field of child poverty, and elsewhere.

## LETTER FROM THE CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR

### Bringing child poverty out of the shadows



Robin Cook's speech at End Child Poverty's annual lecture underlined one of the key conundrums about campaigning on child poverty - we have a government that is committed to ending child poverty but is terribly quiet about it.

Many would agree with Cook when he says: 'There have been plenty of good policies. But there has been a rhetoric deficit in talking them up. Perversely, given the normal criticism of this Government, its achievements on child poverty suffer from being under spun.'

York's professor of social policy Jonathan Bradshaw summed up the thinking when he described the treatment on child poverty being: 'good and getting better' but 'the dose needs strengthening' when he addressed the Joseph Rowntree Foundation centenary conference in the same week as Cook's lecture.

Cook believes there is a political calculation in the government's reticence to take credit for what has been done on poverty. His explanation is that we have accepted that Britain is basically a conservative nation so the government is trying to deliver social justice by stealth. The most recent British Social Attitudes could help challenge the belief that stealth is the only option. The survey found that 82 per cent of the public thought the gap between rich and poor is too wide and 58 per cent thought it was the Government's responsibility to close it.

The other parties should take note. Tackling poverty should be moved beyond the vagaries of party politics.

When End Child Poverty teamed up with Age Concern at the party conferences earlier this

year, part of our aim was to get the other main parties to develop their policies towards children living in poverty as well as older people and see the need to tackle poverty across generations.

In the five years since Tony Blair made his pledge to end child poverty a million children are likely to have been taken out of poverty and that is something to shout about. But another million children must be removed from poverty in the next five years if the government is to hit its target of halving child poverty by 2010. Surely all the major political parties could commit to that. One million children taken out of poverty by 2010 should be a major domestic policy commitment in every manifesto.

One more million out of poverty is the overall message of the charter that End Child Poverty will be launching early next year. We have proposals that will all help any government remove the next million children from the blight of poverty. We will be encouraging as many organisations as possible to put their names to the charter.

To promote the charter and encourage regional debate, End Child Poverty is embarking on a regional *Bringing it home* roadshow next year to raise awareness of child poverty and try and get it higher up the agenda. We are hoping to highlight what is being done locally and regionally and explore how child poverty is to be tackled at all levels if it is truly going to be banished by 2020.

End Child Poverty has no intention of hiding in the shadows.

We plan to follow the advice of Alistair Darling when he was Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and 'shout from the roof tops' what needs to be done to end the blight of child poverty in the UK.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Stearn'.

Jonathan Stearn  
Campaign Director

## TEN FOR A MILLION

End Child Poverty is planning to publish a charter for getting the next million children out of poverty. The charter will be launched early next year, if you are interested signing up to the Charter and would like to see an advance copy then please contact Claire Kober at [info@ecpc.org.uk](mailto:info@ecpc.org.uk).

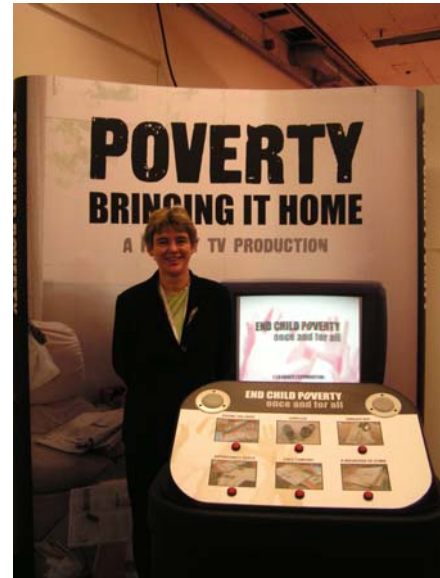
## THE END CHILD POVERTY ROADSHOW

In 2005 ECP embarks on a nationwide roadshow, visiting every region of the country to inform the public, decision makers and opinion formers about the existence, extent and impact of child poverty in the UK.

The aim is to increase awareness of the issue and in so doing raise the profile of child poverty in the approach to a general election. In each region ECP is seeking to join forces with local organisations engaged in anti-poverty work and incorporate their expertise, ideas and examples of best practice into the events.

Events will take place over two days. Day one will comprise a media launch and a policy seminar with invited representatives from public bodies, local government, academia, the voluntary and community sector and local organisations engaged in anti-poverty work.

The following day ECP will take the '*Bringing it home*' stand, which reveals the reality of poverty through the eyes of children living in poverty, into a regional city centre, where we will be able to engage with members of the public and therefore raise awareness of the issue.



New Education Secretary Ruth Kelly at the Bringing it Home stand.

### In your region:

The roadshow will begin in Newcastle on the 21-22 January, with contributions from Newcastle and Middlesbrough Councils, Vera Baird QC MP and Professor John Veit-Wilson, as well as people involved in local projects.

Then we'll be traveling on to: York, 4 - 5 February; Bristol, 11 - 12 February and Nottingham - 18 - 19 February, with further dates & venues to be announced for the following months.

For more information on this please email [laura@ecpc.org.uk](mailto:laura@ecpc.org.uk)