

## **GMB FIGHTING FOR A BETTER FUTURE**

As many of our members will be aware from attending our monthly meetings and listening to reports on how we spend branch funds, supporting local charitable organizations across Northamptonshire. Most of our support goes towards food banks and more recently we have been asking them to report on the demanding work they are engaged with in their local communities.

This report reflects some of that unstinting work from their teams of volunteers who are witnessing first-hand the rise in dependency on food parcels and personal items that families simply can't afford to buy.

The tragedy of food banks in recent years has organically grown into the fabric of most working-class communities across the UK but on a scale no one would have predicted. It is a serious and calculated indictment of 13 years of Tory government who have, quite deliberately allowed this to happen and for it to become normalised in a weakened economy.

Today, thousands more households are turning to food banks as the cost-of-living crisis cuts deep into family budgets and this is just a few words of what people are saying as they turn towards food banks to help them cope.

- "I feel I have gone from being an average, hard working-class citizen to someone who is now in poverty and reliant on food banks to feed my children".
- "I'm really struggling to make ends meet. I need urgent dental treatment but that's totally an unaffordable luxury, even with a registered dentist".
- "I can't afford after school clubs for my teenage children and in winter we couldn't turn on the heating. We simply couldn't afford to pay the bills". "It breaks my heart".
- "Without access to a local food bank my option would be just eating bread and butter. Really, I would be going hungry.

Most of the people who go to food banks talk about feeling ashamed but they have no choice if the family are to have food and basic essentials. The support they receive from staff and volunteers is something that must be highlighted for praise and gratitude. We see from our visits, the remarkable work they do.

These people are not 'scroungers' as many Tory Ministers (Suella Braverman, Home Secretary) would have us believe. Many of them are people who are in work but who simply don't receive adequate wages to support their families. This is Tory Britain today!

Recent research from the Trussel Trust (nationwide network of food banks) reported last year, the distribution of 2.9 million food parcels to people across the UK. A significant amount of those parcels were for children, from baby food to clothes. What comes across in the most tangible way is that families are scared. Parents skipping meals so that they can feed their children. How can any of this be right in one of the richest economies in the world?

It isn't right. It isn't fair!

All the food banks that I contacted reported a doubling increase in demand and struggling to cope with that demand, which will they fear, eventually lead to turning people away. These are decent people, (many of them in work) struggling with the crisis manufactured by this Tory government. Pensioners, NHS staff, teachers, all seeking help amid this cost-of-living crisis handed down by this Tory government.

All of the food banks that we support are saying exactly the same thing. They can verify the data coming out and they are all at breaking point with the pressure that has been placed on them to feed and provide food and essential items. They are all struggling to meet demand and, more worryingly, that demand is growing significantly among pensioners and families with babies.

This is all deliberate in Tory Britain today. Food banks are a strategic deliberate blueprint to dismantle the welfare state in favour of self-reliance among the most vulnerable in society today. It's a disgrace, that as a society we are now totally locked into charitable, volunteer run organisations to help poor people survive.

This sits well for Tory Britain, comfortable in the knowledge that they have consciously manufactured this obscenity of fear and subservience while feeding their obsessive greed for financial worth, at any expense. It's a political choice. It's what they perpetuate every day in government and the consequence of that maligned spiteful behaviour is of no concern to them. They don't care!

The economy, under this corrupt and incompetent government, made worse by Brexit, fuelled by lies was deliberate, intentional, and ideological. A further tool to destroy the welfare state, the social safety network for the most vulnerable in our society. It wasn't about the lie of "saving money" it was about making money for themselves and their wealthy supporters.

We will always support our food banks for as long as we can and we care deeply for those who give their time freely to provide families with the critical help they depend on and need every day.

The clouds are darkening over Tory Britain. The UK economy is broken and it's going to get worse for those in most need of help, care, and support. That has to change! It's clear, the extent of what's going on with this corrupt government. While families struggle to put food on the table, while children fall hungry, we see every day, new revelations of unethical and dodgy practices seeping out of Westminster .

- Cash peerages. Countless wealthy Tory supporters rewarded with a seat in the House of Lords – while our children go hungry!
- Unethical, excessive expense claims – while our children go hungry!
- Second jobs-. Countless Tory MPs earning six figure sums on top of their Westminster salaries – while our children go hungry!
- Pandemic cronyism. Countless instances (amounting to billions of public money) of Tory corruption and cronyism – while our children go hungry!

This Tory government is the most corrupt government in living memory and the evidence is overwhelming, blatant, and more importantly, it has gone unchecked with none of them being held accountable for their criminal action and greed. This Tory government laughs in the face of accountability. It needs to be defeated at the next General Election! Over 13 wasted years of greed and economic disaster while stealing from the public purse and leaving families and communities derelict and demoralised.

Many years ago, I attended a Labour Party conference when Neil Kinnock was leader of the Labour Party at the time (1984) issued a stern warning to the British electorate about a further Tory Thatcher government. "Don't be young, don't be ill, don't grow old". How that resonates today, tenfold!

It's happening now, in shed loads more and all in the name of democracy. Their version of democracy. Not the kind of democracy you might be familiar with in a distant past but a democracy where the balance of power is determined on the unilateral dictate of the super-rich and their political puppets.

They are a disgrace, but saying it is not enough. We need to get rid of them and soon. The one thing this right-wing Tory government fears more than anything, is the day we stand together and fight back. The mainstream media are not on our side, they never have been and we know this, but we have decency, faith, and a belief that things can change if we stand together and fight back.

Fighting for our families

Fighting for our children

Fighting for our communities

Fighting for a decent living wage

Fighting for change

Fighting for a future

Enough is enough!

Alan Irwin

GMB Branch Secretary, Northants.