

LABOUR REPRESENTATION COMMITTEE

<http://www.l-r-c.org.uk>

Response from David Miliband

Thank you for your email to David regarding the LRC's questions. As you can imagine, he is receiving a large number of emails at the moment. David apologises that he can't get back to you himself and has asked me to reply on his behalf.

Firstly, you raise the issue of Afghanistan. David is committed to the mission in Afghanistan. British forces in Afghanistan are keeping our streets safe.

However David is clear that this war will never end by military means alone.

It is evident that the international forces in Afghanistan cannot simply fight their way out of an insurgency. The insurgency in Afghanistan is deeply embedded, and goes back some 30 years. It is therefore vital that the Afghan Government leads the way towards a political settlement.

The purpose of military effort – our pressure on the insurgency - and civilian improvement – building infrastructure, increasing school participation - is to create the conditions for such a political settlement to succeed.

Once all of the tribes in the country are involved in dialogue, and can buy into Afghanistan's constitution, free of corruption, the people will have faith in their own Government.

While some are arguing that you have to wait for the right time to go down the political track, in truth it has already begun. It is shaped and reshaped every day in the minds of the people.

Engagement with those who have been involved in attacks is difficult. But allowing space for discussion to bring people from the insurgency into Afghan society, removing the violence, is not appeasement. It is exactly what we want to achieve: the end of the war, with the sustainable capacity in the country to stop it from happening again.

It is for this reason that David believes British forces should only come home when Afghan forces are able to take responsibility for their own security.

Secondly, your email talks about the public sector cuts that are going ahead. David is a strong critic of the Tory-Lib Dem budget. In his view the decision to increase VAT disproportionately, and unfairly, hits some of the most vulnerable in society.

He believes that this budget is a major risk to the British economy, withdrawing support for families, jobs and businesses too fast and too soon.

The Tories also have no plan for growth- which is essential for reducing the deficit over the long term.

David wants to demonstrate that this budget was not 'unavoidable', as George Osborne tries to argue, it was a choice. David is arguing for an alternative, progressive set of measures that would help to reduce the deficit:

- Ending the charitable status of private schools would raise enough money to go ahead with Labour's planned expansion of free school meals.
- Doubling the bank levy would mean we could avoid the Tory cuts to capital allowances which provide incentives for manufacturing investment.
- Introducing a Mansion Tax on 2m homes would allow us to avoid the cuts to Housing Benefit which risk making hundreds of thousands of vulnerable families homeless.

Finally, you asked about the fight for Trade Union freedom. David passionately believes that trade unions are an integral element of a fair, democratic and equal society.

The link between Labour and trade unions is a central part of who we are as a Party.

David would defend this link nationally and strengthen it locally. For him it is non-negotiable.

David wants to ensure employees have a voice at work- to do so he would promote rights to information and consultation and also reform corporate governance so that there are employee representatives on the pay boards of top firms.

He wants to ensure that employment rights are enforced including through better co-ordination of enforcement agencies. He also believes we should consider ways that trade unions can access non-unionised workplaces to recruit members and organise them.

I hope we can count on your support in leading the Labour Party forward with David Miliband.