



BFAWU PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

ANNUAL REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2020 – JUNE 2021

This report covers the period from the beginning of the Parliamentary session following the return from Summer recess in September 2020 through to June 2021. Throughout this period Parliament adopted a “hybrid” model for all its proceedings, with a limited capacity in the main Chamber at any one time, with speaking opportunities determined in advance via a “call list” to allow for contributions to be made virtually and in person. “Westminster Hall” debates restarted towards the end of this period, again in hybrid format, from Committee Rooms rather than the usual venue. No outside visitors have been allowed onto the Estate and most MPs’ staff continued to work from home throughout.

It is not yet clear whether Parliamentary business will return to normal in the Autumn, or when non-passholders will be allowed to attend meeting with MPs on the Parliamentary Estate.

PARLIAMENTARY OVERVIEW

Much of the period covered by this report has been dominated by the ongoing public health challenge posed by COVID-19, after new and highly transmissible variants of the virus led to a second wave of infections and a spike in hospitalisations and deaths. Despite savage criticism from Boris Johnson’s former adviser Dominic Cummings – who alleges the PM was happy to “let the bodies pile high” and that the Health Secretary is a serial liar who failed to protect the vulnerable – the relative success of the vaccination programme and prospect of a “road map” out of restrictions has seen the Conservatives continue to build a lead in the opinion polls. Evidence points to the burden of the pandemic falling particularly heavily on BAME communities, and the structural racism that pervades British society has also been raised in the context of the Black Lives Matter protests following the murder of George Floyd in the US.

Against this backdrop it is disappointing that Keir Starmer’s leadership of the Labour Party has failed to make significant inroads into Johnson’s support, despite the growing appreciation of sleaze and incompetence which characterises the Tory approach. If the withdrawal of the Parliamentary whip from former leader Jeremy Corbyn and wave of suspension of left activists was meant to convey the impression of “strong leadership” it does not appear to have worked.

A decidedly mixed set of results in the May election, with Labour losses including the Hartlepool by-election triggered by the resignation of Mike Hill and even Durham County Council, has seen increased criticism of the leadership, with people across the party feeling they are no longer clear what Labour stands for.

Briefings widely suspected to be from the Leader’s office to the press that Angela Rayner was to be made the scapegoat for the poor electoral performance not only obscured better results in places like Manchester and London but also backfired as she emerged stronger from the resulting reshuffle. Whilst also unable to sack the likes Andy McDonald (the pro-trade-union Employment Secretary) as he had apparently planned, Starmer has replaced Anneliese Dodds, who served in the Shadow Treasury team under John McDonnell, with Progress-supporting Rachel Reeves. The promotion of Alan Campbell to the position of Chief Whip

also seems to signal an intention to move the party further to the right, although perhaps not at the speed the Blairites would wish. Noises-off from prominent right-wingers reportedly advising Starmer like Lord Mandelson – who attacked the trade unions for being dominated by “hard left factions” – have been met with strong criticism. Although Starmer has privately argued this is not his view of the unions, he has yet to publicly repudiate Mandelson.

Meanwhile, the scandalous practice of “fire and rehire” appears to be growing apace across the economy, with incomes coming under further pressure – especially for the low-paid/benefit claimants for whom the £20 uplift in Universal Credit is set to be abolished. Young people have been hit particularly hard by the rise in unemployment, as businesses such as hospitality have suffered from the impact of the pandemic. Debt charities report a major increase in the level of personal debt and, with the ban on evictions coming to an end, it is feared that there might be a significant increase in homelessness. The growth in the numbers of people using food banks since the pandemic started is an indication of the extent of poverty and food insecurity across society – another significant area of concern to the BFAWU’s Parliamentary Group (see below).

If this was not enough, the food manufacturing sector also faced challenges with the impact of Brexit, which has already seen increased bureaucracy around food exports and difficulties in recruiting. Looking ahead, there are concerns that new trade deals could lead to a race to the bottom on food standards and that any future divergence from EU regulations could limit access to European markets.

LEGISLATION

Bills of concern in the 2019-21 Parliamentary session have included:

AGRICULTURE ACT

During the passage of the Agriculture Bill, the House of Lords passed amendments which would have prevented the UK government lowering minimum food, animal welfare and environmental standards in the event of any future trade deal with the US. Press attention concentrated on the danger of “chlorinated chicken” but reports also suggested that US standards allow the incorporation of cancer-causing agents in the production of bread. Despite promising that they had no intention of lowering standards, Tory MPs voted to take the protection out of the legislation.

COVERT HUMAN INTELLIGENCE SOURCES (CRIMINAL CONDUCT) ACT

Widely dubbed the “Spycops” Bill, this legislation gives state agents or informers legal immunity from prosecution for committing criminal acts (even including torture, rape and murder) if they receive authorisation from their handlers. Given the acknowledged history of undercover police informers targeting trade unions, anti-racist groups, environmental protesters and even the family of Stephen Lawrence (a teenage victim of a racist murder), this understandably drew widespread opposition from across the movements, including

human rights NGOs and other civil society groups. The BFAWU joined other TUCG unions in writing to the Home Office and signing a public statement in opposition to these measures. To make lawful in the future abuses such as those being investigated in the Mitting (Spycops) Inquiry was also seen an insult to the victims struggling for justice.

Keir Starmer, however, viewed the legislation as “necessary” to put existing practice on statutory footing, and instructed MPs not to vote against it. 34 Labour MPs broke the whip, leading to a spate of resignations from his frontbench team, including by Shadow Treasury Minister Dan Carden. Despite later attempts to amend it in the Lords, the Bill eventually received Royal Assent without any meaningful safeguards.

OVERSEAS OPERATIONS ACT (SERVICE PERSONNEL AND VETERANS ACT)

This Bill provided for a five-year limit to prosecutions of British service personnel and veterans for crimes (including breaches of the Geneva Convention) which took place whilst on military service overseas, unless the prosecution could prove that significant new evidence had become available. Opponents of the Bill argued that this measure would undermine International Law, thwart attempts to pursue justice, and encourage a climate of impunity amongst British forces on active service. Given that the families of those killed in the Ballymurphy Massacre in 1971 could not receive justice until a legal judgment 50 years later, in 2021, many critics felt that the time limitations failed to reflect the complexity involved in such cases. Starmer again told Labour MPs to abstain on Second Reading, but this again triggered frontbench resignations in opposition.

DOMESTIC ABUSE ACT

Whilst this Bill took steps to create new criminal offences and protect abused individuals (usually women) from being cross-examined in legal cases by their abusers, campaigners felt that the legislation could have been significantly stronger – especially by addressing the economic and other material factors which lead abuse victims (especially those with children) to stay with their abusive partners, and by preventing the fear of “parental alienation” being used as an excuse to grant abusers continued access to children. The BFAWU Group sent briefings from the Women Against Rape coalition to the Shadow frontbench team and to Peers considering amendments.

Upcoming legislation announced in the Queen’s Speech in 2021-22 also contain measures of significant concern, with the Speech also notable for the absence of the previously promised Employment Bill:

POLICE, CRIME, SENTENCING AND COURTS BILL

There is a large Bill containing a wide variety of measures – including some which are being welcomed, such as increased sentences for attacks on emergency service workers.

However, parts of the Bill contains draconian attacks on the right to protest and measures to discriminate against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. The government claims this is necessary to prevent widespread disturbance from protests such as Extinction Rebellion and Black Lives Matter (and no doubt fears there will be significant protests over COP26).

However, the measures don't refer to violence or rioting but to peaceful civil disobedience in so far as it might cause "noise", "nuisance", "disturbance" or even "impact". Even one-person protests can be criminalised under the new laws. We have already seen police attack the peaceful protest on Clapham Common from women mourning the murder of Sarah Everard, and it is feared that the new Bill could lead to such tactics being deployed in increasing frequency. It is also unclear whether the right to lawful trade union picketing in industrial disputes could be trumped by these new public order offences.

The Bill has been "carried over" from the previous session and is currently receiving line-by-line scrutiny by MPs in Committee, and further attempts will be made to amend it in the Lords. It's been reported that Labour planned to abstain in the Commons before the outrage over the Everard protests pushed the party to oppose the Bill at Second Reading. It is to be hoped that the Labour whip holds firmer in opposition than it did during the last session (see above) and that Labour will vote clearly against the Government's proposals. Meanwhile, we have already seen sizeable "Kill the Bill" protests around the country, and hopefully unions will look to add their weight to this protest movement.

ONLINE SAFETY BILL

This Bill seeks to force the big tech and social media giants to act against threats, abuse and harassment online, as well as take action against disinformation, incitement, or otherwise harmful content. Whilst the ambition is to be supported, there needs to be sufficiently robust safeguards against handing unaccountable political control and influence to powerful multinational companies, enabling them to police what counts as acceptable political opinion.

NEW PLAN FOR IMMIGRATION

The Government is currently consulting, prior to the publication of legislation, on proposals which would make it harder for asylum seekers to make legitimate claims for a right to remain in the UK, fast-track appeals and give immigration authorities additional powers to deport people on having their claims rejected.

Unions and migrant rights organisations are challenging these draconian attacks on vulnerable people, many of whom are fleeing societies torn apart by war, climate change or economic devastation – when the focus should be on bosses seeking to profit from human trafficking and exploitation.

BFAWU PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

The Bakers' Union Parliamentary Group was launched in October 2008 to bring together supportive MPs to work with the union in a concerted and effective way on issues of concern. The Group works to an agenda set by the union and its members, and meets with supportive MPs on a regular basis approximately every three months, in addition to specific Ministerial, individual or strategy meetings.

Group meetings provide an opportunity for the union to keep MPs fully informed of concerns as well as discussing parliamentary strategy for taking those campaigns forward. The Group is professionally supported by Solidarity Consulting (**please see Annex 3 for details of the parliamentary consultancy**) who take forward the programme of work thus authorised, in liaison with BFAWU Head Office.

Chair of the Group is Ian Mearns, Labour MP for Gateshead who is also Chair of the influential Parliamentary Backbench Business Committee. Recently elected MP Olivia Blake (Sheffield Hallam) was elected Vice-Chair.

Meetings during the period of this report have been held virtually via Zoom, and have taken place on 4 November, 11 January (on the Right to Food), and 24 February (with the Real Bread Campaign). The agenda for the previous meeting was as follows:

AGENDA

1 Introductions/Apologies

2 GUEST SPEAKER: Real Bread Week/Honest Crust campaign

3 Right to Food campaign and members survey

4 Budget demands (SSP campaign/ Supermarket windfall tax)

5 Other Political and Industrial issues

6 Date of Next Meeting

7 AOB

Formal Correspondence

The Group's Secretariat is in regular informal contact with MPs, including the Shadow Frontbench and others throughout the year. The following item of formal correspondence was issued:

Letter to McDonald's CEO re Health and Safety.

Early Day Motions

EDM are motions tabled by backbench MPs to signal concern or support for an issue. They are never debated or voted upon but provide a barometer of opinion in the House which will be drawn to the attention of the relevant Minister and are a useful focus for campaigning.

There are hundreds of EDMs tabled each session and there are many reasons an MP may not sign up in support. Frontbench MPs, Parliamentary Private Secretaries (PPSs) and those on Select Committees traditionally do not sign EDMs, and other MPs will usually avoid

signing EDMs that appear to relate to a specific geographical area or constituency outside their own. One EDM that has proved an exception in the last session was the Group's Statutory Maximum Working Temperature EDM, which attracted widespread support.

In this period the union has tabled/supported the following EDMs:

2019-21 Session

EDM 1523 – REAL BREAD WEEK CAMPAIGN

Ian Mearns (32 signatures)

EDM 1251 – FOOD INSECURITY

Ian Byrne (59 signatures)

EDM 1187 - £20 UPLIFT IN UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Jon Trickett (30 signatures)

EDM 1039 – UNION LEARN

Grahame Morris (94 signatures)

EDM 872 – STATUTORY SICK PAY (No 2)

John McDonnell (21 signatures)

2021-22 Session

EDM 86 FIRE AND REHIRE

Grahame Morris (41 signatures)

KEY CAMPAIGNS

FOOD POVERTY AND THE RIGHT TO FOOD

Following a decade of austerity-driven cuts and attacks to the welfare system, a substantial network of food banks had already developed in order to provide emergency food assistance for households struggling to put food on the table, even before the Coronavirus pandemic. But leading operators such as the Trussell Trust noted that, between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, food banks in the Trust's UK-wide network distributed 2.5 million emergency food parcels to people in crisis, a 33% increase on the previous year.

With schools providing free school meals to low-income families, the prospect of closures or half-terms without this essential provision threatened to put an additional burden on those least able to afford it. Only after a high-profile campaign by footballer Marcus Rashford was the government forced to make provision. However, there was widespread anger

when pictures of government food parcels outsourced to the private sector were pictured on social media. The provider, a division of Compass, which has public contracts worth millions, was offering a parcel which could barely feed a child for two days let alone a week – and was clearly nowhere near what a family could have purchased for themselves had vouchers been provided instead.

Clearly, the problem is not a lack of food availability, per se, but the extent of poverty – meaning people simply can't afford to buy decent quality nutritious meals for their families and at the same time pay the bills. This points to the need for action to tackle endemic low pay across whole sections of the economy (see below). The £20 uplift to Universal Credit was a lifeline without which yet more people would be pushed into food poverty – and yet the government is planning to withdraw the increase in the coming weeks.

Liverpool West Derby MP Ian Byrne launched a campaign around introducing a legal Right to Food, tabled EDM 1251 on the issue and secured a Westminster Hall debate (21 October):

The crisis of food insecurity, which is leaving no MP's constituency untouched, affects the basic human rights of millions of our citizens every day. We are seeing a crisis of food poverty born out of the political choices and systemic failings created over the past four decades, which have now reached a tipping point for so many in our communities. The figures are devastating for one of the richest nations in the world and highlight the inequality of the UK in 2020.

The Trussell Trust reports a soaring 81% increase in emergency food parcels from food banks in its network during the last two weeks of March 2020 compared with the same period in 2019, including a 122% rise in parcels given to children as the coronavirus pandemic continued to unfold. As long as I live, I will not forget meeting a community leader in Liverpool five minutes from my home and seeing what I thought was a queue for the bingo in my local community centre. There were people, young and old, drawn from across my community. I was corrected by the community leader, and told that, in fact, it was a queue for the food bank. It haunted me then, and it haunts me now, because it was so unfair and so wrong.

The problem of escalating food poverty in the UK can be fixed. We can see in the evidence available the direct correlation between the cuts in Government welfare spending and the numbers of families with children, pensioners, the working poor and homeless people queueing up for food parcels because of those cuts. Like austerity, this is a political choice, not a pre-determined occurrence. Therefore, it cannot be fixed without a concerted effort by the Government of the day to take clear responsibility in developing solutions and policy to eradicate the problem's root cause. We need more voices like the inspirational Marcus Rashford, bringing the plight of hungry children to the attention of the public and the political classes.

One key recommendation made by civil society organisations and various independent experts, such as United Nations committees, is to introduce a right to food into domestic law. That approach recognises that the UK has ratified international treaties such as the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights and three separate international conventions, protecting children, women and people with disabilities, but has never incorporated them into domestic law. Each of those treaties contains a specific mention of the right to food, yet those legally binding international treaties have limited influence and bearing in domestic courts. The right to food would need to be strengthened by the establishment of a strong system of domestic legal entitlements and the provision of easily accessible accountability mechanisms that redress violations and contribute to the improvement of citizens' wellbeing.

Working with "Fans Supporting Foodbanks", Liverpool has become the first "Right to Food City", and a campaign toolkit has been circulated for others to sign up with – leading to other

cities and councils across the UK backing the call for a right to food to be included in the government's National Food Strategy (which is set to report later this year). A strategy meeting was held on 11 January on how BFAWU could support the campaign – and raise the scandal that food workers are themselves sometimes facing food poverty – with Byrne and campaigners on food poverty from the Scottish Parliament.

MPs have been informed of the results of the survey undertaken by the BFAWU (in conjunction with Unity Consulting in Scotland) on the experience of food workers themselves in relation to food insecurity following the pandemic. The survey found that:

- 19% had run out of food because of a lack of money
- 40% had eaten less than they should because of a lack of cash
- Over a third (35%) ate less to make sure others in the house got a meal
- 21% relied on food from friends and relatives
- More than 7% had experience of using food banks

That people designated “key workers” during a public health crisis who performed heroics to keep the supermarket shelves filled would themselves experience food poverty or anxiety about their ability to put food on the table is shocking. Ian Lavery managed to press Government Minister George Eustice on this point during Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Questions (22 April 2021):

Ian Lavery:

A shocking report released by the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union has revealed that one in every five people working in the British food sector, which stretches from factories and distribution firms to cafés and supermarkets, live in households that have run out of food because of a lack of money. We live in arguably the sixth richest country on this planet and our workers are going hungry because of meagre wages. Does the Secretary of State agree that access to affordable and nutritious food is a basic human right, and will he commit to ensuring that the right to food is included in next month's Queen's Speech? (914582)

The Minister's answer was deeply complacent and showed no indication that the government understands the issue or has any intention of tackling it. Other BFAWU Group members continue to confront ministers with the reality of food poverty in their constituencies and to demand that the right to food is put into legislation, for example speaking in a debate on Child Poverty (21 May):

Mick Whitley (Birkenhead) (Lab) [V]

This issue has a special resonance in my constituency, where over a third of all children are living in poverty. In fact, there are few communities in the country more left behind than the north end of Birkenhead. Here, a male resident can expect to live 11 fewer healthy years than the national average. The typical household income after housing costs is just £16,000, and over half of all children are living in poverty.

The pandemic has been difficult for everyone, but it is particularly bad for young people living in north Birkenhead and the many communities like it. For too long, they have borne the brunt of an austerity agenda that has decimated frontline services. For many of these children, a school dinner is the only hot meal they can rely on in a day, and with schools closed and unemployment soaring, covid-19 has plunged many of them into deprivation and food poverty.

I urge the Minister to do everything she can to ensure that the blight of child food poverty is stamped out once and for all. That means listening to organisations such as the Trussell Trust and

making the £20 uplift to universal credit permanent. It means heeding the calls of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Ian Byrne) and incorporating the right to food in the national food strategy. With 72% of all children struggling with food poverty having at least one parent in employment, it means delivering on the promise of an employment Bill that can end, at long last, in-work poverty.

Beth Winter (Cynon Valley) (Lab) [V]

A staggering 4.3 million children in the UK currently live in households below the poverty line, according to the End Child Poverty coalition, and of the four UK nations Wales has the highest level of child poverty. In my constituency of Cynon Valley, 35% of children live in poverty, well above the UK average of 30%.

The rising levels of inequality, poverty and hardship in our country are no better illustrated than by the shockingly increasing prevalence of food poverty in the UK. It has been estimated that 2.4 million children in Britain are at risk of malnutrition as a result of living in poverty. Words cannot describe how incensed I am by that, and we should all be filled with anger about the fact that we in the UK, one of the richest nations in the world, have allowed this situation to arise. We should be ashamed that food banks have been normalised in this country; it is a political choice and a shocking indictment of us.[...]

I call on every nation in the UK to enshrine the right to food in law, which could include an immediate expansion of eligibility for free school meals to all children in families receiving universal credit or equivalent benefits; a move towards the provision of universal nutritious free school breakfast and lunch for every child in compulsory education; and the school kitchens to become community kitchens; welfare benefit system changes that give people security and dignity, including but not limited to a permanent £20 uplift to universal credit, which should be extended to legacy benefits; and piloting universal basic income following the lead from Welsh Government.

I recognise the cost implications, but they are not insurmountable. We can afford it; we are the fifth richest country in the world. Why not introduce a wealth tax on covid profits and end tax evasion and avoidance by the rich? There is another way. We need to get our priorities right as a country, and I am determined to do everything I can in collaboration with others to end the scourge of child food poverty.

Grahame Morris (Easington) (Lab) [V]:

I pay tribute to Marcus Rashford. I have no doubt that if he had not lent his support to the campaign, it would not have moved the Conservative politicians in the way it did. I also want to single out for special praise my good and hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Ian Byrne) who has championed the right to food campaign and for its inclusion in the national food strategy.

[...]Let me say to Conservative Members who have spoken in the debate that this is the defining issue of our time, and it is not happenstance that so many children have been driven into poverty; it is a direct result of Government policies

In advance of the National Food Strategy's final report, anticipated later this year, the Parliamentary Group is looking to work with academics from Cardiff University and Bickbeck College (University of London) on research into the state of employment in the food sector, and offering a radical alternative vision for the future of food based on putting the public good ahead of private profit. Even if the Food Strategy does contain a recommendation to consider introducing a Right to Food, it will be necessary to build further pressure on the government to ensure that the necessary urgent action is taken.

ECONOMY, JOBS, PAY AND WELFARE

Whilst the economy as a whole took a significant hit due to the Coronavirus, several sectors saw a significant increase in sales and profits. Many large corporations continued to pay shareholder dividends throughout the period, even though they were also in receipt of substantial government assistance via the furlough scheme, business rate relief and other tax breaks. At the same time, by May 2021 there were over three-quarters of a million fewer workers on company payrolls, and unemployment (despite a temporary fall as hospitality started to reopen) is still forecast to reach 5.9% by the end of the year – the highest since the 1980s.

Frustratingly, ahead of the Budget statement on 3 March, the Shadow Treasury team was briefing against the idea that Labour should call for any windfall taxes on big business, in the belief that any tax rise would necessarily choke off demand. Whilst it is true that taking money off ordinary families would have this effect, taxes redistributed from the rich are more likely to be spent in local shops and businesses rather than stashed overseas in tax havens. To refuse to claw back millions from businesses who made a fortune during the crisis was also to limit the scope for programmes to support the creation of new jobs across the economy.

BFAWU made a submission to Labour's pre-budget consultation (February 2021) with the following observations and proposals:

Minimising further outbreaks

BFAWU remains concerned that, at present, workers who ought to be self-isolating to prevent transmission of the disease often feel unable to afford the financial impact of staying away from the workplace. We would therefore call for the reform of Statutory Sick Pay, to include significantly higher rates, improved eligibility for low earners, and a requirement for large and profitable corporations to fund this directly. (A separate detailed submission has been made outlining proposals here).

No cliff-edge for furlough withdrawal

Whilst we hope that the vaccination roll-out will help to ensure that sectors impacted by the lockdowns can resume trading, employers might well be tentative in re-opening given the uncertain conditions, and therefore require extra flexibility in determining whether they can afford to bring workers back from furlough. Companies who fail to top-up the salaries of furloughed workers with the remaining 20% should be legally prohibited from issuing dividends to shareholders.

Action on low pay and zero hours contracts

The Real Living Wage (calculated by the Living Wage Foundation as the basic minimum necessary for a decent standard of living) presently stands at £9.50 per hour (and £10.85 in London). Yet it is estimated that 5.5 million jobs across the UK pay below this level. Equally, workers deserve the security of a guaranteed minimum number of hours each week. Evidence suggests that pay increases for those at the lower end of the income distribution are more likely to result directly in spending increases.

Keep and extend the £20 uplift – and write-off COVID debts

Since the crisis started, the numbers of people claiming Universal Credit has rocketed, and the additional £20 payment has been essential to keeping people from destitution. Cutting their payments would be a body blow, and self-defeating at a time when local economies require people to be spending. The uplift should also be extended to all those on legacy benefits.

At the same time, Citizens Advice figures suggest we have seen 6 million people falling behind on their bills, including 20% of key workers. At 1.2 million have been pushed into severe debt. Shelter

has warned that rising rent arrears means that we face the danger of a tsunami of evictions when the present restrictions are ended.

BFAWU supports calls for a COVID-19 windfall tax to fund a comprehensive debt write-down for struggling workers, and for the extension of protections against the use of bailiffs.

Investment in jobs

Such has been the relentless commercial pressure over recent years arising from increasing competition over price between retailers, suppliers in the sector have often had limited capacity to invest in their businesses.

The [Resolution Foundation](#) think-tank has argued – on the basis of evidence from the IMF – that there is scope for a £100bn fiscal stimulus in the UK economy, to generate new jobs and increase productivity across the economy.

Nationally it has also been estimated that £18bn is required over the next two years to help make progress towards the UK's net zero carbon targets. A small fraction of such investment could have a transformative impact in securing the future of high skilled, well-paid jobs in food manufacturing and retail – and avoid the present race to the bottom. Critically, investment must go into skills and training.

Raising wealth taxes

Whilst there should be no tax rises which choke-off the capacity for economic recovery – such as increases in general taxation for basic rate taxpayers or substantial council tax increases – the budget should ensure that those who have been able to accrue significant additional wealth over the course of the pandemic should be required to contribute to stimulating the wider recovery of the economy going forwards.

BFAWU would welcome an increase in Corporation Tax, Capital Gains Tax, and a bespoke Windfall Tax on pandemic profits.

Invest in the High Street

Consideration should be given to the creating of a targeted voucher scheme to provide each household £150 to spend in local independent high street retailers and SMEs, particularly in those areas which have suffered from a substantial loss in footfall during the crisis. This could help to avoid the development of “ghost towns” in which retail units are no longer seen as commercially viable.

Sadly, the government's failure to heed calls on the inadequacy of Statutory Sick Pay levels and entitlement criteria has meant people will have exposed their work colleagues to potential infection because they could not afford to self-isolate. As Richard Burgon told the House (2 March 2021):

Throughout the pandemic, trade unions such as Unite the union have made consistent demands on the Government to increase statutory sick pay to the level of the real living wage, and to remove the minimum income requirement so that every worker who needs to self-isolate is supported to do so. The Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union has also called for the Government to legislate for full rights to contractual sick pay for all workers from day one, paid at 100% of wages. Outside the Conservative party, there is even widespread support in Parliament, with MPs from seven parties signing up to support my motion calling for sick pay at a real living wage level.

Not only is this failure to act likely to have contributed to the extent of transmission in the second wave, leading to further lockdowns and economic impacts, it could yet expose UK workers unnecessarily to new variants and increase the chances of a third wave.

The failure to bring the national minimum wage into line with the Real Living Wage and abolish the exploitative youth rates means that over five million workers are paid less than

what the Living Wage Commission determines is the bare minimum to afford a decent standard of living. BFAWU Group MPs are keen to ensure there is no weakening of Labour's 2017 and 2019 manifesto commitments on tackling low pay and fighting for a living wage for all.

Another key policy priority must be to end zero-hours contracts, which make it impossible for people to manage their finances with any degree of security. As John McDonnell has argued (19 April):

Low pay holds people back and is often linked to insecure work, which is why the Government should also act to end zero-hours contracts. Insecure and low-paid work means insecure housing and instability for children.

MPs will continue to work with BFAWU and the Zero Hours Justice Campaign to fight for secure jobs on decent pay.

Ultimately, the government should be following the example of Joe Biden in the US and putting significant resources into economic stimulus and job creation, especially in developing high-quality green jobs to help deliver a "just transition" to tackle the problem of climate change. This should be a key demand of the movement in the run up to COP26.

In the absence of such an active economic programme, levels of poverty continue to grow apace, with a report by the Legatum Institute think-tank showing that more than 15 million people – 23% of the UK population – are now in poverty, and suggesting that the pandemic has pushed nearly 700,000 more into poverty, with some 9.6 million people's household incomes at least 25% below the official definition of poverty.

In this light, the government's plans to abolish the £20 uplift in Universal Credit is scandalous. Similarly, the decision to slash by 45% the emergency funding given to councils for Discretionary Housing Payments and the impending end to the ban on evictions threatens to increase the rate of street homelessness significantly.

SKILLS AND TRAINING

Incredibly, at a time of such labour market uncertainty – where the need for opportunities for workers to develop their skills has never been greater – the government has chosen instead to scrap the Union Learning Fund, which was highly effective in encouraging workers to come forward and engage in training programmes developed by their union colleagues. It is blatantly a politically motivated attack on the unions, which will only harm people's life chances and compound social inequality.

In a Westminster Hall debate on the subject (18 November), Group member Kim Johnson highlighted how the scheme has helped BFAWU members:

Kim Johnson: The essential food industry is reliant on migrant workers and those with no or low-level qualifications. The Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union has provided Unionlearn-funded training to more than 31,000 workers over the past 20 years, including functional literacy and numeracy skills and English to speakers of other languages. Like other union partners, it provides a route back in for those failed by the education system, those with low confidence, and those whose first language is not English but who are likely to be key to the success of the business. An

independent study in 2018 from the University of Exeter found that 68% of learners with no previous qualifications gained a qualification.

It is incredible that the Government—who were prepared to put billions of pounds into contracts with Serco for test, track and trace, and millions into procuring personal protective equipment not fit for use—made the decision to scrap the ULF. I urge the Minister to reconsider that decision.

Grahame Morris tabled the well-supported EDM 1039 in protest at the decision, and the TUC sought to enlist the support of several big employers to lobby Tory Ministers, sadly without success.

BFAWU Group MPs will continue to press the case for high-quality training and genuine apprenticeship opportunities. The food and drink manufacturing sector represents a very significant share of employment in the UK, contributing £28bn to the economy annually. Sadly, employment in the sector is too often seen as low-skilled and poorly paid. The BFAWU Parliamentary Group invited the Real Bread Campaign (run by Sustain) to speak at a meeting in February about their drive to ensure that the traditional skills employed in small and medium-sized bakers are not lost to future generations, as automation further undermines the number and quality of jobs in the sector.

BFAWU Group Chair Ian Mearns tabled EDM 1523 to promote Real Bread Week, regretting that commercial pressures from the big supermarkets “have too often led to the inclusion of so-called processing aids and other additives in mass-produced baked goods”, and that, as a consequence, suppliers have overseen “a general deskilling of the workforce and race to the bottom in the pay and conditions of those employed in the baking industry”.

It is vital that the National Food Strategy sets out plans to ensure proper investment in skills and training opportunities in the sector, and the Parliamentary Group will seek to ensure that this is reflected in debates following its publication.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Since the start of the pandemic, MPs have sought to raise concerns about the health and safety of workers in both the food processing and manufacturing sector and in food retail. As mentioned above, the lack of adequate SSP means that workers have felt obliged to turn up to work and risk infecting colleagues. Given that production lines mean that social distancing guidelines cannot always be followed, this leads to particular problems in industries like the food sector – especially where people work in low ambient temperatures in which the virus appears to transmit more easily.

The number of workers employed at food manufacturing sites employed on agency contracts has also raised the risk. As Shadow DEFRA Minister Daniel Zeichner told the House (5 November 2020):

We are hearing from our trade union colleagues that they do think that there is a problem, not least because in some cases people are working on agency contracts, which moves them from factory to factory. That has been, I think, addressed in care homes, but I do not think it has been addressed in the food processing sector, and that is in all our interests, frankly. Obviously, we need to get on top of the virus, but if there are people who are putting themselves at risk, that puts others at risk, too.

Clearly the blame here lies not with the workers but with an employment model based on low-pay, temporary and insecure contracts and fewer rights at work.

The hospitality and fast-food retail sectors also saw workers complain about a lack of adequate health and safety provision and the failure to implement appropriate guidance. Sky News reported that McDonald's UK had started an internal investigation after whistleblowing workers claimed COVID rules were being ignored in some of its restaurants. Workers at restaurants in Kent, Merseyside and Greater Manchester reported that stores had been repeatedly breaking their own health and safety rules during the winter wave of COVID-19. Despite official company policy, staff temperatures are now often not checked, social distancing screens aren't always used and staff can't wash their hands every 30 minutes, as advised. Stockport MP Navendu Mishra wrote to the managers of stores in his constituency, whilst BFAWU Group Chair Ian Mearns wrote to McDonald's UK CEO Paul Pomroy to express his concern (see Correspondence Annex).

In addition, MPs are conscious of the mental-health toll of the pandemic on workers – from social isolation due to being furloughed to anxiety over working in unsafe conditions – and the rise in domestic violence and relationship breakup. In response, the government must face pressure to invest in our overburdened mental health services.

EMPLOYMENT AND TRADE UNION RIGHTS

The pandemic has seen widespread concern over the legal framework around employment rights, with reports of unscrupulous employers using the opportunity to lay off more experienced staff without their accrued entitlements in order to replace them with cheaper recruits further down the line. Notoriously, some big employers have even resorted to the shameful practice of “fire and rehire”, where workers are forced to accept inferior pay, terms and conditions or lose their jobs altogether. BFAWU joined Unite, GMB and fellow TUCG unions in signing a letter to PM Boris Johnson demanding that the practice be made unlawful.

In Labour's 2019 manifesto, the party argued that:

Many of the things that help make our working lives happier – paid holidays, pensions, weekends, health and safety at work, a minimum wage, rights against discrimination, maternity and paternity rights and more - have been won by people working through their trade unions.

But trade unions have been tied up by unfair legal restrictions over the last 40 years and have not been able to defend workers properly. The growth of insecure work, exploitative working practices, and ‘take it or leave it’ conditions of work has come about because the balance of power in the workplace has tipped too much towards bad employers.

Labour will reset the scales. As a country we should be leading the world, rather than joining a race to the bottom in employment standards.

Labour will:

- Repeal anti-trade union legislation, including the Conservatives' undemocratic Trade Union Act 2016, and create new rights and freedoms for trade union unions to help them win a better deal for working people, negotiate better pay and quality of

working life and enable people to organise in their workplace if they wish to.

- Simplify the law around union recognition, ending the current complexity and removing barriers to workers being collectively represented by a recognised trade union in their workplace.
- Strengthen and enforce trade unions' right of entry to organise, meet and represent their members and to recruit. People shouldn't have to face difficulties at work alone, and workers should be able to freely organise with their colleagues to make their workplaces better for everyone if they wish to.
- Make sure trade union reps are able to take enough time off to perform their union-related duties, undertake relevant training and take part in their union's democratic structures.
- Introduce statutory time off for trade union equalities reps so they have the time to support colleagues facing discrimination and contribute to positive changes in workplaces that make discrimination less likely to happen in the future.
- Remove unnecessary restrictions on industrial action and allow people to take industrial action through their trade union when they feel it's the only option left against bad and unreasonable employers. We will remove the unnecessary and bureaucratic barriers placed on people and trade unions trying to make their working lives better and make sure their rights are respected.
- We will restrict the grounds on which employers can resort to legal action based on technicalities to override legitimate, democratic decisions taken by the people who work for them. Employers should come to the negotiating table, rather than resort to legal action. This harms industrial relations, and fails to deal with the underlying problems that make a workforce so desperate they are prepared to take strike action.
- Allow workers and trade unions to use secure electronic and workplace balloting.
- Ban union-busting and strengthen protection of trade union representatives against unfair dismissal and of union members from intimidation, harassment, threats and blacklisting.
- Hold a public inquiry into the injustice of blacklisting to ensure that it truly becomes and remains a thing of the past. We will release all papers on the Shrewsbury 24 trials and 37 Cammell Laird shipyard workers.
- [If outsourcing to the private sector] We will choose to do business with companies that: treat their workers well, recognise trade unions and have provision for collective bargaining arrangements and fair wages clause.
- Ensure employers uphold their obligations to consult with recognised trade unions. In government we will review and amend legislation relating to 'protected conversations' in order to prevent existing rights at work being undermined.
- Consider how we could introduce 'roving safety reps' for workplaces the right for trade union health and safety reps to inspect workplaces and employers other than their own

Labour's Shadow Employment Secretary Andy McDonald (who served in Jeremy Corbyn's Shadow Cabinet) has now set up an Employment Taskforce to examine "how and why these policies should be improved or updated to address long-standing issues, new developments relating to the pandemic and how Britain can recover and rebuild from the pandemic", and "how the Labour and trade union movement can better communicate these policies effectively, both to trade union activists and to the general public".

BFAWU and its Parliamentary Group will be lobbying for these policies to be retained in full and built upon, and that there should be no return to the days when Labour leaders refused to give backing to striking workers.

TRADE UNION COORDINATING GROUP (TUCG)

BFAWU is a founding member of the TUCG, which was established in 2008 to coordinate campaigning activities in Parliament and beyond on issues of common concern between member unions. It coordinates union interventions within the movement and provides a comradely arena for inter-union discussion of current campaigns and strategic priorities.

The TUCG now comprises eleven trade unions after Equity voted to affiliate earlier this year, bringing the total membership of TUCG-affiliated unions to over one million members: BFAWU, EQUITY FBU, NAPO, NUJ, NEU, PCS, POA, RMT, UCU and URTU.

NUJ took over the Chair for 2021-22 from the NEU at February's AGM.

During the period covered by this report, principal activities of the TUCG have included:

- Held regular executive meetings to share information and coordinate campaigns.
- A virtual fringe for the TUC (15 September) and launched a pdf pamphlet on the importance of trade unions in combatting racism and the threat of the far right.
- Virtual fringe for the Labour Party conference with MPs Rebecca Long-Bailey, John McDonnell and Apsana Begum.
- Coordinated a joint letter opposing the Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Bill.
- A virtual STUC fringe meeting on "Sickness, Safety and Precarious Work - COVID 19 and Beyond" (16 November).
- A roundtable discussion with Shadow Chancellor Anneliese Dodds on 7 December.
- Virtual fringe at the Women's TUC on the way new working practices owing to COVID-19 had impacted on the working lives of women – with speakers including BFAWU General Secretary Sarah Woolley, NEU Joint General Secretary Mary Bousted and UCU General Secretary Jo Grady.
- A virtual fringe event at the Scottish TUCG on the Right to Food – with speakers including Ian Byrne MP, Elaine Smith MSP, Sarah Woolley, Dr Andrew Williams of Cardiff University (20 April).
- Co-sponsored a Mayday Rally with organisations including the Campaign for Trade Union Freedom and Institute of Employment Rights, with speakers including Shadow Employment Secretary Andy McDonald, Lord John Hendy and FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack.
- Coordinated TUCG signatures to a letter to Prime Minister Boris Johnson calling on the government to outlaw the practice of "fire and rehire".
- Organise a sub-committee working on a joint statement and possible publication on Trade Union responses to Climate Change ahead of the COP26 in November.

The next TUCG executive will take place on 16 July and consider plans for upcoming campaigns, including possible fringe events at the TUC and Labour Party conference later in the year.

Regular TUCG Parliamentary actions:

- Briefings distributed to all MPs and Peers of all parties
- Meetings with MPs/Peers, Ministers & Shadow Departmental teams
- Union press notices widely circulated to MPs and Peers
- Messages of support for unions in dispute solicited from MPs and sister unions

The TUCG website (www.tucg.org.uk) includes information of interest to union members and MPs, as well as details of union campaigns, events, blogs and video footage from demos and rallies. We are @TUCGinfo on Twitter.

ANNEX 1: EARLY DAY MOTIONS

EDM 872 – STATUTORY SICK PAY (No. 2)

John McDonnell (21 signatures)

That this House recognises that the covid-19 pandemic has highlighted that statutory sick pay (SSP) of £95.80 per week is not enough to live on, and that nearly two million low-paid part-time or zero hours workers are excluded from any sick pay at all; is gravely concerned that this situation puts them in the impossible situation of having to work while potentially unwell, thus putting their lives and those of their colleagues, customers and even patients at risk; recognises that many thousands of good employers already offer decent contractual sick pay arrangements for their workers, and believes they should not be undercut by bad employers who pass their responsibility onto taxpayers; recognises that the cost of failing to protect public health also causes severe economic damage; and supports the Don't Leave, Organise campaign in calling for Full Sick Pay Now via legislation to make it compulsory for all employers to provide six weeks of contractual sick pay at full pay, followed by an increased rate of statutory sick linked to the level of statutory maternity pay, with further steps to cover self-employed and zero hours workers.

McDonnell, John
Lavery, Ian
Corbyn, Jeremy
Webbe, Claudia
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Osborne, Kate
Stephens, Chris

Barker, Paula
Edwards, Jonathan
Lewis, Clive
Begum, Apsana
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Burgon, Richard
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd

Ali, Tahir
Dorans, Allan
Abbott, Ms Diane
Trickett, Jon
Yasin, Mohammad
Hill, Mike
Sultana, Zarah

EDM 1039 – UNIONLEARN
Grahame Morris

That this House recognises the exemplary and invaluable role played by Unionlearn in helping people acquire skills and qualifications to boost their job prospects and make a valuable contribution to the economy; applauds Unionlearn for aiding hundreds of thousands of learners at all levels, from basic numeracy and literacy to degree level qualifications; notes that during the past 12 years more than 40,000 Union Learning Representatives have been trained, and over a quarter of a million people are being given training and learning opportunities through their union every year; is appalled that the Government intends to axe this vital resource at such a challenging time for education, employment and the economy; and calls upon the Government to reconsider and reverse this damaging decision.

Morris, Grahame	Begum, Apsana	Owen, Sarah
Hill, Mike	Fellows, Marion	Johnson, Kim
Mearns, Ian	Lucas, Caroline	Jarvis, Dan
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd	Cummins, Judith	Lloyd, Tony
Byrne, Ian	Olney, Sarah	Smith, Nick
Osborne, Kate	Howarth, Sir George	Hobhouse, Wera
Mishra, Navendu	Greenwood, Margaret	Yasin, Mohammad
Hopkins, Rachel	Law, Chris	Dorans, Allan
Winter, Beth	Cruddas, Jon	Paisley, Ian
Lavery, Ian	Burton, Richard	Bonnar, Steven
Trickett, Jon	Girvan, Paul	Gibson, Patricia
Edwards, Jonathan	Whitley, Mick	MacAskill, Kenny
Webbe, Claudia	Eastwood, Colum	McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
Stephens, Chris	McKinnell, Catherine	Whitford, Dr Philippa
Shannon, Jim	Campbell, Mr Gregory	Abrahams, Debbie
Barker, Paula	Foy, Mary Kelly	Day, Martyn
Spellar, John	Benn, Hilary	Keeley, Barbara
Sultana, Zarah	Gwynne, Andrew	McLaughlin, Anne
McDonnell, John	Davies, Geraint	Brennan, Kevin
Robinson, Gavin	Timms, Stephen	Eagle, Ms Angela
Sharma, Mr Virendra	Oswald, Kirsten	Ali, Tahir
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell	Eagle, Maria	Dowd, Peter
Whittome, Nadia	Brown, Alan	Crawley, Angela
Chamberlain, Wendy	Long Bailey, Rebecca	Monaghan, Carol
Moran, Layla	Farry, Stephen	Norris, Alex
Carmichael, Mr Alistair	Huq, Dr Rupa	Sheppard, Tommy
Cooper, Daisy	Abbott, Ms Diane	Carden, Dan
Farron, Tim	Fovargue, Yvonne	Butler, Dawn
Lewis, Clive	Dromey, Jack	Elliott, Julie
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma	Hanna, Claire	Corbyn, Jeremy
Blake, Olivia	Donaldson, Sir Jeffrey M	Stone, Jamie

EDM 1187 - £20 WEEKLY INCREASE TO UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Jon Trickett (30 signatures)

That this House acknowledges that the £20 a week uplift in Universal Credit has provided much-needed, vital support to millions of people during the covid-19 outbreak; expresses disappointment that there was no commitment to making this increase permanent in Spending Review 2020; notes with concern analysis by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation which found that ending the £20 increase in April 2021 will leave roughly 16 million people in families facing an overnight loss of £1,040 a year; further notes that the £20 uplift has not applied to legacy benefits during this crisis; and calls on the Government to make the £20 uplift in Universal Credit permanent and also applying this increase in payment to all legacy benefits.

Trickett, Jon
Lavery, Ian
Webbe, Claudia
Thewliss, Alison
Edwards, Jonathan
Barker, Paula
Dorans, Allan
Carden, Dan
Oswald, Kirsten
McDonnell, John

Hopkins, Rachel
Johnson, Kim
Lake, Ben
Osborne, Kate
Saville Roberts, Liz
Williams, Hywel
Mearns, Ian
Hill, Mike
Fellows, Marion
Bonnar, Steven

Shannon, Jim
Yasin, Mohammad
Lucas, Caroline
Stephens, Chris
Lewis, Clive
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Sultana, Zarah
Abbott, Ms Diane
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd

EDM 1251 – FOOD INSECURITY

Ian Byrne (56 signatures)

That this House notes that approximately 10 million people in the UK are experiencing food insecurity; further notes that the use of food banks was increasing before the covid-19 pandemic, has effectively doubled during the pandemic and all indications are that this situation will continue to get worse; is concerned that children in particular have been badly affected by the covid-19 crisis and that, according to Trussell Trust figures, the number of food parcels given to children rose by 52 per cent; acknowledges the profound and devastating consequences of food insecurity on the health, wellbeing and livelihoods of people in our communities; believes that the Government has a duty to ensure nobody in our communities goes hungry and that the “Right to Food” should be enshrined in UK law in order to make clear this obligation; and calls on the Government to set positive targets and monitor progress accordingly and include the “Right to Food” in the Government’s National Food Strategy white paper which is due to be published in 2021.

Byrne, Ian
Blake, Olivia
McDonnell, John
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Winter, Beth
Davies, Geraint
Carden, Dan
Sultana, Zarah
Whittome, Nadia

Abbott, Ms Diane
Morris, Grahame
Trickett, Jon
Begum, Apsana
Mearns, Ian
Foy, Mary Kelly
Osborne, Kate
Whitley, Mick
Lavery, Ian

Barker, Paula
Hopkins, Rachel
Edwards, Jonathan
Hendry, Drew
Hanna, Claire
Bonnar, Steven
Burgon, Richard
Greenwood, Margaret
Butler, Dawn

Duffield, Rosie
Webbe, Claudia
Dorans, Allan
Ferrier, Margaret
Corbyn, Jeremy
Osamor, Kate
Hobhouse, Wera
Shannon, Jim
Howarth, Sir George
Long Bailey, Rebecca

Abrahams, Debbie
Eagle, Ms Angela
Efford, Clive
Cooper, Rosie
Lake, Ben
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Johnson, Kim
Lewis, Clive
Hill, Mike
Williams, Hywel

Saville Roberts, Liz
Mishra, Navendu
Lucas, Caroline
Dowd, Peter
Stephens, Chris
Hanvey, Neale
Slaughter, Andy
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Grant, Peter

EDM 1523 – REAL BREAK WEEK CAMPAIGN

Ian Mearns (32 Signatures)

That this House celebrates Real Bread Week and the recent upsurge in interest in traditional baking methods; welcomes the role of many small and medium sized bakeries across the UK in providing quality and choice for their customers; regrets that commercial pressures have too often led to the inclusion of so-called processing aids and other additives in mass-produced baked goods; further regrets that pressure exerted by retailers on suppliers has seen a general deskilling of the workforce and race to the bottom in the pay and conditions of those employed in the baking industry; is concerned about the implications of automation in further limiting the volume and quality of jobs in the sector; believes that consumers and workers alike benefit from the production methods in the baking of Real Bread, made with healthy, natural ingredients; and therefore calls on the UK government to introduce a new Honest Crust Act to ensure clear and accurate labelling of baked products, and to invest in the ability of businesses of all sizes to further develop skills and well-paid employment opportunities in the sector.

Mearns, Ian
Edwards, Jonathan
Thewliss, Alison
Begum, Apsana
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Hill, Mike
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Shannon, Jim
Mishra, Navendu
McDonnell, John
Hopkins, Rachel

Corbyn, Jeremy
Morris, Grahame
Byrne, Ian
Dorans, Allan
Osborne, Kate
Grant, Peter
Barker, Paula
Webbe, Claudia
Lavery, Ian
Burgon, Richard
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma

Farron, Tim
Olney, Sarah
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Trickett, Jon
Wilson, Munira
Jardine, Christine
Grady, Patrick
Cooper, Daisy
Chamberlain, Wendy
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd

2021/22 Session

EDM 85 – FIRE AND REHIRE TACTICS

Grahame Morris (41 Signatures)

That this House notes with alarm the growing number of employers who are dismissing and re-engaging staff on worse pay and terms and conditions, a practice commonly known as fire and rehire; agrees with the Government that such tactics represent an unacceptable abuse of power by rogue bosses, many of whom are exploiting the covid-19 crisis to increase profits at the expense of loyal staff who have risked their lives during the pandemic to keep businesses going; welcomes the Government's stated commitment to tackle those shameful abuses; calls on the Government to

publish the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service report into the practice received by Ministers on 17 February 2021; and further calls on the Government to outlaw this form of industrial blackmail, as is the case in other European countries, to protect UK workers from exploitation by unscrupulous employers.

Morris, Grahame
Osborne, Kate
Lavery, Ian
Barker, Paula
Mishra, Navendu
Hopkins, Rachel
Corbyn, Jeremy
Hardy, Emma
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Byrne, Ian
Webbe, Claudia
Trickett, Jon
Burgon, Richard
Abbott, Ms Diane

Sultana, Zarah
McDonnell, John
Winter, Beth
Dromey, Jack
Mearns, Ian
Whitley, Mick
Hollern, Kate
Foy, Mary Kelly
MacAskill, Kenny
Edwards, Jonathan
Gardiner, Barry
Gwynne, Andrew
Williams, Hywel
Hobhouse, Wera

Johnson, Kim
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Dodds, Anneliese
Rees, Christina
Betts, Mr Clive
Matheson, Christian
Davies-Jones, Alex
Maskell, Rachael
Carden, Dan
Begum, Apsana
Hanvey, Neale
Farry, Stephen
Hanna, Claire

ANNEX 2: FORMAL CORRESPONDENCE

Paul Pomroy
Chief Executive Officer
McDonald's UK
11-59 High Rd
East Finchley N2 8AW

18 March 2021

Dear Mr Pomroy,

I am writing in my capacity as Chair of the Bakers, Food and Allied Worker Union (BFAWU) Parliamentary Group, which brings together over 30 Labour MPs and Peers to discuss issues of concern to the Union and its members.

A report by Sky News today suggests that McDonald's UK has launched an internal investigation following complaints that "workers at restaurants in Kent, Merseyside and Greater Manchester" reported "that stores have been repeatedly breaking their own health and safety rules".

As you will be aware, employers have a legal and moral responsibility to ensure that their employees are able to work in a safe environment.

Whilst we acknowledge the challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and that formal instructions which have been issued to your store managers, we are very concerned that there appears to have been such a widespread failure to ensure compliance across the country. It is particularly concerning to hear that workers feel they might be adversely treated by managers if they voice their concerns with regard to their own safety and with a contagious disease, that would also include the safety of their families.

Parliamentarians would ask you to take these concerns on board, and help to ensure there is no repeat of this dangerous situation, by entering into formal recognition agreements with the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU) so that the interests of workers are comprehensively addressed across all McDonald's-owned stores and franchises nationwide and customers can be reassured that staff that are preparing their food are treated with a good level of managerial responsibility.

The Union and its Parliamentary Group are very keen to be reassured on this important issue for the Union's membership.

I would appreciate it if you address any correspondence on this matter to the Group's Coordinator, Mr Michael Calderbank, at calderbankmj@parliament.uk.

Yours Sincerely,
Ian Mearns MP Chair, BFAWU Parliamentary Group

ANNEX 2: BFAWU GROUP MEMBERS

Bell Ribiero-Addy MP
Beth Winter MP
Cat Smith MP
Catherine McKinnell MP
Claudia Webbe MP
Clive Lewis MP
Dan Carden MP
Dawn Butler MP
Emma Hardy MP
Grahame Morris MP
Ian Byrne MP
Ian Lavery MP
Ian Mearns MP
Jeremy Corbyn MP
Jo Stevens MP
John Cryer MP
John Healey MP
John McDonnell MP
Justin Madders MP
Kate Osborne MP
Kerry McCarthy MP
Kim Johnson MP
Laura Pidcock MP
Lisa Nandy MP
Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP
Louise Haigh MP
Mary Foy MP
Mick Whitley MP
Nadia Whittome MP
Nav Mishra MP
Olivia Blake MP
Paula Barker MP
Rachel Hopkins MP
Rebecca Long-Bailey MP
Richard Burgon MP
Valerie Vaz MP
Zara Sultana MP

Streatham
Cynon Valley
Lancaster and Fleetwood
Newcastle Upon Tyne North
Leicester East
Norwich South
Liverpool Walton
Brent Central
Hull West and Hessle
Easington
Liverpool West Derby
Wansbeck
Gateshead
Islington North
Cardiff Central
Leyton and Wanstead
Wentworth and Dearne
Hayes and Harlington
Ellesmere Port
Jarrow
Bristol East
Liverpool Riverside
Durham North East
Wigan
Brighton Kemptown
Sheffield Heeley
City of Durham
Birkenhead
Nottingham East
Stockport
Sheffield Hallam
Liverpool Wavertree
Luton East
Salford
Leeds East
Walsall South
Coventry South

ANNEX 3: SOLIDARITY CONSULTING

**This report was written and compiled by
SOLIDARITY CONSULTING LTD**

Who we are

Solidarity Consulting is a professional parliamentary consultancy engaged by BFAWU which advises and assists unions with their parliamentary campaigns, working on a not-for-profit ethos to “*secure for trade unions an effective voice in Parliament.*”

Originally set up by the late Simeon Andrews as “Union Services”, the Solidarity Consulting team currently comprises:

- **Michael Calderbank**, whose current responsibilities include UNITE PCS, NUJ, BFAWU and the TUCG
- **Richard Hanford**, whose current responsibilities include PCS, RMT and the Drugs and Alcohol treatment sector; assisting with the TUCG
- **Charley Allan**, whose current responsibilities include UNITE PCS, POA and the Justice Sector and assisting with the TUCG

What we do

- Provide detailed information on forthcoming parliamentary business and the legislative timetable
- Advise and instruct union officers, activists and members on the detail of parliamentary procedures and mechanisms for possible intervention
- Assist on all parliamentary campaigns, including the development of a base of active support in Parliament and the coordination and administration of the –
 - **Bakers Union Parliamentary Group**
 - Drugs, Alcohol and Justice Cross-Party Parliamentary Group
 - Justice Unions Parliamentary Group
 - National Union of Journalists Parliamentary Group
 - PCS Parliamentary Group
 - RMT Parliamentary Group
 - Unite Parliamentary Group
- We also co-ordinate the Trade Union Coordinating Group

How we fit in

Although independent, Solidarity Consulting seeks to work as an integrated part of each union’s parliamentary operation. Directly answerable to the General Secretary, we work in daily liaison with the union’s Campaigns office. Solidarity Consulting provides an on-the-spot interface between the union and MPs and we are present in Parliament on a daily basis, organising briefings, lobbies and interventions. We ensure that the union has a presence in Parliament and its campaigns are consistently progressed.