

VIEW FROM THE HOUSE

The resignation of a Secretary of State, a reversal of policy in the budget and the junior doctors plan to go on strike again. Parliament was busy in the run up to the Easter recess.

Finally and belatedly, Ian Duncan-Smith can no longer stomach his own government's policy of making the disabled shoulder the burden of cutting the deficit whilst giving tax cuts to the most wealthy. The Tory pretence that 'we are all in this together' has been exposed as a hypocritical deception. I congratulate the individual voices, disability groups and the Labour Party who campaigned to oppose these measures and enabled us to change the budget by voting down George Osborne's budget proposals.

Jeremy Hunt is missing and not interested in health. Unable to turn up to the Urgent Question on the Junior Doctors Contract, a junior minister failed to respond to my suggestion that the Government, not a third party, engages in discussions again to avoid another strike. Jeremy Hunt refuses to negotiate and will be responsible for the strike. When I asked him, he was unable to confirm there are safe staffing levels at the Manor Hospital. The CQC report said the maternity service was inadequate. Rather than improving the service at the Manor and at the other local hospitals, mothers to be are being denied the choice of where they give birth. This is unacceptable.

This Government doesn't do listening mode. I signed an amendment tabled by David Burrowes MP to the Enterprise Bill to remove the extension of Sunday trading laws. The only winners are large stores. It was proved during the Olympics that extending Sunday trading damaged small businesses. It also adversely affected staff's working life and the religious community. Sunday would have become just another working day. The vote to stop the extension was won - a triumph for democracy as 67% of the British Public oppose extending Sunday trading hours.

Democracy remains under threat. The Government's plan to force all schools to become academies means there is no oversight of our schools by elected representatives. Moreover the plans also include the removal of parent governors but places power into the hands of eight unelected, unaccountable regional school commissioners. The asset stripping of local schools into academy chains that generally do not improve standards must be opposed. I say keep schools accountable to the communities, parents and children that they serve.

I hope you had a peaceful Easter.

Valerie Vaz MP

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