

BALANCED MIGRATION



Launch of the Points Based System: statement from the Cross Party Group on Balanced Migration

27 November 2008

Commenting on the launch of the Points Based System, Frank Field MP and Nicholas Soames MP, co-Chairmen of the Cross Party Group on Balanced Migration, said:

“Today certainly marks a major reconstruction of the immigration system which has been in a state of collapse. That is to be welcomed but no amount of spin can hide the fact that the Points Based System will not stop tens of thousands of non-EU migrants coming to the UK and competing with the British unemployed for work; and will not stop our population from reaching 70 million by 2028. The Government admits that at best last year it might have cut 12,000 from net immigration of 237,000. This is a finger in the dyke – not the radical action that we urgently need to bring migration into balance, and stabilise the size of our population.”

Background

1. Under this Government, Britain has witnessed the largest scale of immigration ever seen in its history. In the last ten years it has tripled, adding 2.5 million to our population while nearly ¾ million people have emigrated. According to official projections, the population of the UK will rise to 70 million by 2028. 70 per cent of this growth is due to immigration – expected to run at a net level of 190,000 a year. Last year net immigration was 237,000.

2. Phil Woolas, the Immigration Minister, pledged in The Times on 18th October 2008 that “the Government isn’t going to allow the population to go up to 70 million”.

3. However, the Government’s argument that their Points Based System (PBS) “can” be used to keep the population of the UK below 70 million is misleading because:

a) There is no clear policy to reduce immigration. Only last week, the Immigration Minister Phil Woolas said “we do not favour a numerical cap on immigration” (House of Commons Select Committee, 20th November 2008, Q6). Indeed, Mr Woolas said that the PBS could mean more immigrants come to the UK, as the following exchange shows:

“Q39 Chairman: So PBS means fewer people coming in ---

Mr Woolas: Not necessarily.

Q40 Chairman: That is what you are saying.

Mr Woolas: Not necessarily.

Q41 Chairman: Not necessarily? It could be more people coming in?

Mr Woolas: Mr Chairman, I noticed the journalists reaching for their pencils and pens in some cases and I am not saying that it will increase...

Q42 Chairman: You must have eyes in the back of your head, Minister; how are you going to manage that?

Mr Woolas: I have good advisers!

Q43 Chairman: So it means more people, does it?

Mr Woolas: No, I did not say that; I said it could mean that.”

b) The numbers do not add up. The Immigration Minister said “Had we introduced the Points Based System a year ago there would be 12% less migratory workers in the country than there are now” (BBC Politics Show, 19th October 2008). The Government arrived at this figure by looking at the impact that its implementation of Tier 2 (which covers skilled, non-EU migrant workers) would have had on immigration last year. It estimates that there would have been “57,300 newcomers instead of the 65,200 that did arrive”. In reality, if this were to be the impact, net immigration would fall from the present level of 237,000 to 225,000. This is not nearly a large enough fall to prevent the UK population from hitting 70 million in 2028.

c) The Immigration Minister claims that the 70 million projection is itself open to question as “fertility and death rate are a major variable in the population” (House of Commons Select Committee, 20th November 2008, Q8). Yet the Government’s official statisticians calculate that 70% of the population increase will be thanks to immigration.

Notes to editors:

1. The Rt Hon Frank Field MP and The Hon Nicholas Soames MP are Co-Chairmen of the Cross Party Group on Balanced Migration. The Group’s Vice-Chairmen are Lord (Bill) Jordan CBE (former President of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union) and Daniel Kawczynski MP (Conservative, Shrewsbury & Atcham). Other members include Tobias Ellwood MP, Roger Godsiff MP, David Taylor MP, Lord Ahmed, Lord Carey (former Archbishop of Canterbury) Baroness Cox, Field Marshal Lord Inge KG, GCB, PC, DL and Lord Skidelsky. Further members will be announced in due course.
2. “Balanced Migration – A new approach to controlling immigration” is available to download at www.frankfield.co.uk and www.nicholassoames.org.uk