

Trade Union motion on the Housing and Planning Act

This branch/branch committee/executive notes the Housing and Planning Act was passed in outline in May 2016, although the regulations necessary to implement it are not yet in place. The main points of the Act include:

- The extension of the Right to Buy (RtB) to Housing Association tenants.
- A compulsion on local councils to sell-off their most 'valuable' homes, with the proceeds to be used to pay for RtB subsidies.
- The imposition of market or 'near market' rents for tenants with gross income over £31,000 (£40,000 in London).
- The abolition of lifetime 'secure' tenancies.
- The ability for private developers to build 'Starter Homes' instead of genuinely affordable social housing on new developments.
- Further deregulation of housing associations and privatisation of planning services

This branch/branch committee/executive condemns these proposals because they would:

1. Do nothing to solve an already severe housing crisis, but will exacerbate it by reducing the number of permanent, genuinely affordable homes for rent.
2. Introduce means-testing to council and social housing.
3. Undermine stable, mixed communities and housing rights.

This branch/branch committee/executive further believes that the housing crisis is damaging the living standards and quality of life of many trade union members. Workers on low and moderate pay now find it increasingly difficult to afford a decent home within reasonable commuting distance of their workplace. An increasing number of our members face exorbitant rents in sub-standard private rented accommodation or excessively long commutes. Any improvements in pay and conditions are swiftly eroded by housing and travel costs. Housing is now a significant workplace issue and one that the whole labour movement needs to campaign around, starting with unqualified opposition to the threats contained in the Housing and Planning Act.

This branch/branch committee/executive therefore resolves to:

- a) Join with other unions, tenants' organisations and housing campaigns, particularly Defend Council Housing and Axe the Housing Act, in intensifying opposition to the Housing and Planning Act and against its implementation.
- b) Campaign to press for the Labour Party to act on policies outlined in resolution passed at its 2016 conference, and for policies supporting:
 - The repeal in full of the Housing and Planning Act
 - The launching of a massive programme of council house construction
 - Suspending the RtB programme in the Council and Housing Association sector
 - The introduction of strong rent controls and strengthened regulation of the private rented sector, ensuring increased tenancy security and adequate space and building standards