

BALANCED MIGRATION



FIRST CROSS PARTY GROUP ON IMMIGRATION CALLS FOR “BALANCED MIGRATION”

8 September 2008

Parliament’s first Cross Party Group on immigration is launched today to promote a new approach to controlling immigration: “Balanced Migration”. The new group’s Co-Chairmen are the former Labour and Conservative Ministers Frank Field MP and Nicholas Soames MP. This will be the first time in British political history that people from the two main political parties have come together to tackle this immensely sensitive and difficult issue. The Group hopes that all party leaders will pay close attention to its proposal for Balanced Migration.

Balanced Migration means that, over time, immigration should be brought substantially lower until it is close to the rate of emigration. This would stabilise the UK’s population and greatly reduce the pressures on public services and society.

An explanatory document, “Balanced Migration – A new approach to controlling immigration” is published today. It was prepared by Migrationwatch UK at the request of the Cross Party Group on Balanced Migration.

Commenting, Frank Field said:

“The unprecedented wave of immigration that Britain has experienced over the past decade or so has undoubtedly brought gains to some sections of the community. One group that has disproportionately borne the cost of such immigration, through pressure on wages, longer waiting lists for decent housing and increased demand for public services, has been lower paid black and white Britons. This group of our population has also often experienced a transformation of their neighbourhoods from settled working class communities to societies which they can barely recognise. The Cross Party Group on Balanced Migration will ensure that the voice of working class people is heard in the public debate.”

Nicholas Soames said:

“We need to strike the right balance between creating a competitive economy with a flexible workforce, and relieving the burdens that uncontrolled immigration is placing upon our society. Balanced Migration would not prevent people from coming to work in the UK for a few years, but it would control the number of people allowed to settle permanently. We propose this as a basis for debate and discussion on a critical issue that must be tackled – and soon.”

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. According to the Government's statistics:

- Immigration will add 7 million to our population by 2031, equivalent to adding seven cities the size of Birmingham.
- In 2009, England is expected to become the most crowded country in Europe, overtaking Holland.
- For the next 20 years we will have to build a house every six minutes for new immigrants.
- The annual benefit of immigration, on the Government's own calculation, is 62 pence per head, per week.

3. The House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs issued a ground-breaking report on the economic impact of immigration in April which called for "a reasoned indicative target range for net immigration" around which policies should be adjusted. The Cross Party Group believes that this indicative target should be Balanced Migration.

4. Balanced Migration would seek to bring the number of immigrants into line with the number of emigrants. The main change would be to limit the number of non-EU citizens who are given the right to settle permanently in the UK. Under these proposals, there would be no fundamental change to arrangements governing asylum; foreign students coming to the UK; or genuine marriages. The new Points Based System would need some modification. Essentially, non-EU citizens would be able to work here for up to four years, after which they would be expected to leave; permanent settlement would be subject to a small annual limit with applicants selected by a further points system. Balanced Migration, once achieved, would mean that new household formation would be reduced by about a third, and the population of England, now nearly 51 million, would stabilise at about 56 million by mid century; by contrast, at present levels of immigration it would by then be 66 million and still rising sharply.

5. "Balanced Migration – A new approach to controlling immigration" is available to download at www.frankfield.co.uk and www.nicholassoames.org.uk