

Higher Education (England) Regulations

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee

The Leader of the Opposition reneged on his clear pledge to deal with historic debt. Does the Secretary of State agree that that policy would have meant graduates repaying not only their own debt but the future debts of others?

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Justine Greening Minister for Women and Equalities, The Secretary of State for Education

Indeed. The Labour party has a confused, muddled, counterproductive and anti-social mobility policy on student fees and student debt that would put at risk much of our higher education sector. It would be absolutely disastrous.

The bottom line is that, even now, across the border in Wales, the Labour colleagues of the hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne are implementing the very increases, in line with inflation, that she is opposing here today. That shows a level of hypocrisy that is becoming a hallmark of the current Labour Front Bench. The bottom line is that they are inâ€”[Interruption.] I am taking no lectures from the hon. Lady about taking interventions when she was scared to take more than two. The bottom line is that Labour's student finance policy is a cold, calculating con trick on young people. It is shameless politics.

I have three serious questions for the Opposition on the policy of no fees, and they are questions that they need to answer. How many of the poorest children in this country are they going to prevent from going to university under that policy? How many world-class universities will shut down because they run out of money? If highly paid graduates do not have to pay to go to university to get their degrees, who is going to pay the bill? Those questions have never been answered. The Opposition have no answers, because having a sensible approach that has the best interests of students, universities and taxpayers at its heart is not their objective, is it? Driving social mobility is not Labour's objective. Enabling more disadvantaged young people to go to university is not their objective. Properly funded universities are not their objective. It is just a cynical con trick. That is Labour's objective. Far from Labour being the friend of students and universities, its policy would destroy opportunity and destroy our world-class universities. This House should see straight through it. Frankly, the motion is not even worth the paper it is written on.

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