



### The Week that was

In the week that the government resurrects **Right To Buy** it simultaneously took steps to plough £1bn into the economy to support first time buyers. Despite the criticisms coming from the political left this week, the coalition government demonstrated its support for workers by pushing hard and ensuring that firms are aware of their new responsibilities to enrol staff into a workplace pension.

This week the 1980's tune **I've got the power** took on a new meaning when 1000 applicants applied for just 25 apprenticeship places with Scottish Power. It is clear that far from diminishing in value and importance apprenticeships are becoming an important **'must have'** qualification for young people seeking to compete and play a part in the technological future of UK PLC. The Coalition's push to increase apprenticeships and opportunities for young people is indeed good news for providers of employment and skills provision.

In its weekend paper, the Sunday Times proclaimed that as far as the employment figures were concerned we could never have a **'Ground Zero'**. The paper raised hope and explained that the UK's ability to create jobs remained undiminished. As expected, there has been briefings, counter briefings, claims and counter claims about what the Chancellor is about to do on Working Tax Credits, Corporation Tax, tycoon tax, 50p top rate and raising the lowest tax band to £10,000.

On Tuesday we read that Iain Duncan Smith and DWP are set to launch a **Foundation for Early Intervention**: this has been a long time in the making and promises to be a real support for families – as long as it doesn't become a), overly bureaucratic and strangled by red tape and b), it must not be a middle class agency whose sole aim is to tell the less well off how to live their lives (George Orwell's 1984). There are clear similarities with the notion of early intervention and Tony Blair's commitment to tackling crime and – more importantly - the causes of crime. The new foundation will be funded by social investment so let's watch and see what's on the cards.

This week Tesco announced that it plans to switch its pensions from RPI to CPI and is consulting on increasing its retirement age from 65 to 67. The Supermarket has also pledged to keep its **Defined Benefit** pension scheme open to **new members** unlike many of its corporate counterparts. What does this tell us? Well it tells us that employers can still be fair to their employees even when they have to make hard decisions.

Also this week Policy Exchange's report announced that unemployed fathers who refused to take up

work experience offers should be stripped of their benefits. It would appear that staff at Policy Exchange were all on leave over the last month and missed the furore over job placements. Maybe they need to reconsider this.

It is estimated that 350,000 stay at home mothers will be adversely affected because their state pensions will be linked to child benefit which is being withdrawn from households with one higher rate tax payer: alas, ministers need to be ever vigilant about the *law of unintended consequences* as it is the beast which continually raises its head.

Finally annual fitness tests will be introduced for every police officer including chief constables it's about time!! Also what a surprise that in this day and age there are no minimum requirements to enter the police force: proposals in the Winsor review have called for minimum requirements of 3 A'levels to enter the force.

### Opposition Position

Despite the opposition benches being fairly quiet on the matter of work experience over the last few weeks, at a conference today Ed Miliband launched a new Labour strategy to help unemployed young people. The party proposes that the Government introduce a bank bonus tax that will then be used to fund work experience schemes for the long term unemployed under 25s. Under the new proposals the Government will pay the wages to businesses for taking on young people, in return for offering them training and experience.

Mr Miliband said "*The Tories want to cut taxes for people with jobs earning over £150,000 a year. We want to stand up for our young people who just need a job.*"

### The headline of the week

**The Metro, Pg.1**

*"The blobby bobbies of Scotland yard"*