

## Meeting with the Prime Minister 2004

On Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December, a group of debt and trade campaigners met with the Prime Minister in his constituency in Trimdon, Co. Durham. [Security was deliciously... *British*, and all the better for that!] Contrary to our fears, 'spin' was conspicuous by its absence. The PM's opening remarks lasted only a few minutes, after which there was ample opportunity for many campaigners to make their views known and to hear Mr Blair's candid reactions. Furthermore, the PM did not attempt to disguise his concern at the strength of the opposition to the Government's stance. This is centred on the issue of economic '*liberalisation*', which relates to both debt relief and trade justice. David Golding and Michael Faulkner were subsequently encouraged by Mr Blair's office to submit a one-page briefing for him, to try to resolve misconceptions and explore pathways to convergence. [See below.]

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### ***Briefing for Blair***

"Liberalisation is not being managed for the benefit of the people in less developed countries, but has, on the contrary, brought abject and agonising poverty to countless millions. For example, having already cut subsidies, etc., Senegal was forced by the IMF in 2001 to withdraw all state support from groundnut production, as a condition for debt relief. This precipitated a major collapse and, since most of the rural population is dependent on the crop, the government had to provide a multimillion pound relief programme to stave off widespread starvation... Speaking of the IMF's liberalisation agenda, Professor Joseph Stiglitz, former Chief Economist of the World Bank, says '*the net effect has been too often to benefit... the well off at the expense of the poor*'. Mr Blair, is this your idea of 'managed liberalisation'?"

(Copy of full text available from David Golding)