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Good afternoon and thank you for contacting me regarding the vote today on university tuition fees.

I am writing to let you know that I am shocked and appalled at the Coalition Government's attempt to put up university tuition fees to such an exorbitant level. Their attitude shows Conservative and Liberal Democrat contempt for equality of opportunity and their lack of understanding how widening access to higher education brings benefits to every corner of society economically, socially and culturally. The claim that poorer students will get help and that therefore that the introduction of increased fees is fair and progressive does not stand up to scrutiny. True progressive policy is to give all young people who want to attend university the chance to do so.

If we all agree that education is a universal good, and that free education to the age of 18 is the gold standard, it is hard to see how free higher education is not also something to strive for. It is well known that the more highly educated a country is, the more prosperous it becomes. In addition education reduces barriers between all classes of people. The more educated a person is, the less fear they have of the unknown, leading to less prejudice all around. Higher education benefits all parts of society, from the lowest to the highest, not just those who have been through the system.

The Coalition is not only proposing unaffordable levels of tuition fees, but also reducing funding to universities by a substantial margin. Not only will future students be burdened with outlandish amounts of debt at the start of their working lives, but the actual education they get will not be up to current standards.

And tuition fees are only the tip of the debt iceberg. University students must also pay for rent, food, books, travel and various other costs, which will increase their debt burden. The choice of subjects could well be restricted because universities will cut departments, especially in the humanities, which are deemed to be less vocational. The idea of education for education's sake will go out the window. Do we really want to live in a society where education is wholly focused on earning a living with the arts considered irrelevant? All of us are enriched by those people who follow their passions no matter what the subject area.

Raising tuition fees shows a short-sighted cynicism on the part of the Coalition Government. These men and women, who themselves were educated at the cost of the tax payer, now blithely say that the country cannot afford to send even 50% of it's children to university. What I say is that this is blatant elitism. I say that the country cannot afford to limit a university education to the wealthy or those few willing to take on a mountain of debt.

We cannot say to our young people that they aren't worthy of the opportunities that we were offered and that so many of us used to change our lives for the better. It is not a case of "I'm aboard Jack, you can pull up the gangplank now."

I will campaign hard against the tuition fee increase and certainly vote against the Coalition Government's inequitable proposals.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fabian Hamilton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'F'.

Fabian Hamilton
Labour Member of Parliament for Leeds North East