

**Message of support from Ken Loach to Right to Work; Right to Welfare group
18th January 2017**

Thank you to everyone involved in arranging this screening and a big thank you to all who have come along.

Paul Laverty, the writer, and I have worked together for a quarter of a century. He lives in Scotland and we exchange messages most days - about what's going on, news items, gossip - and important things like football scores.

We found we were sharing many stories of people whose lives were thrown into chaos by having their social security payments stopped. Sanctions. This could happen quite arbitrarily, on an instant, and they would be left with nothing. No food, no way of paying rent, dependent on charity. They are caught in a bureaucratic process with so many traps they are almost bound to fail.

Paul and I thought we should look further. We went on a trip round Britain, London to Glasgow, but we mainly went to the midlands and the north of England. Everywhere we heard the same story. Desperate and profound poverty. We met many in this situation but statistics show there are hundreds of thousands.

Just one figure: 7 million people in families where someone is working live in poverty. And these are people who are actually in work!

Our first visit was to my home town, Nuneaton, in the midlands. The very first person we met was a 19 year old lad, living in a room provided by a charity. He had a mattress on the floor and an old fridge. Paul asked him what was in the fridge. He opened the door - nothing. Not milk, not food, nothing. Did he ever go hungry? Yes, the previous week he hadn't eaten for three days.

We have been asked if we want government ministers to watch this film. The answer is 'no'. They know exactly what they are doing. They want to show that poverty is the fault of the poor. That unemployment is the fault of the unemployed.

Otherwise we would challenge their whole rotten system. That is what gives them their wealth and privilege.

You will be comforted to know that Jeremy Hunt, the minister currently wrecking the National Health Service, is about to make £15 million profit from the sale of his education company, Hotcourses, to an Australian firm.

Grotesque wealth, like his, exists alongside shocking deprivation. Grinding poverty is being deliberately and systematically imposed on the most vulnerable citizens. It amounts to conscious cruelty. It is why we must organise for change - fundamental, structural change.

I hope you enjoy meeting Katie and Dan. They are not obvious victims, not extreme cases. Katie could be your sister or daughter - or you. And you will know many people like Dan.

Thanks again for coming. Success in your current struggles. Warmest good wishes from all of us - and solidarity!

Ken Loach