

# MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY

*NorthEast*

*April 2008*

## Drop the Debt Fast 12 April – 17 May



This is a milestone year for the debt campaign, marking ten years since the 70,000-strong human chain encircled the G8 in Birmingham in 1998. The North East was there in strength (that's some of us below) and we hope we will again provide good support - for both the Birmingham event on 18<sup>th</sup> May and for the Drop the Debt Fast from 12<sup>th</sup> April until 17<sup>th</sup> May, in the run-up to the event.

Together we've achieved great things, but much more is possible with resolute campaigning. Never let it be said of us that *"They snatched defeat from the jaws of victory!"*

### **The (only?) view that counts**

A message to global poverty campaigners from Beverly Keene, International Coordinator of Jubilee South, with members in over 50 poor countries:

*"Your efforts in Birmingham 10 years ago (that's some of us in photo) marked a milestone... Yet the debt problem continues to rob the people and countries of the South of our rights to health, education, housing, water and... our sovereignty.*

*"It is vital that northern campaigners continue to stand in solidarity with the South in order to achieve a lasting solution to the debt crisis."*





# DROP THE DEBT FAST

**A 36-DAY ROLLING FAST WILL DEMAND DEBT CANCELLATION FOR 36 POOR COUNTRIES.** The rich world needs to *pick up the pace* as these countries are still suffering under a huge debt burden, while millions of their people live in extreme poverty.

The fast will begin as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund hold their Spring Meetings, and end on Sunday 18 May when we mark the **10th anniversary of the Birmingham G8 human chain**. Each day we will focus on one country that urgently needs the chains of unpayable and unjust debts to be broken.

Join the fast for a day or more in your community. Find out more and register at: [www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/fast](http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/fast)

**PICK UP THE PACE!**





## And in the North East

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**\*An 'All Together, Demonstrative Fast'  
On Friday 16<sup>th</sup> May,  
(16<sup>th</sup> May is the actual 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Jubilee 2000's  
'Human Chain' in Birmingham)**

## **\*And our own 'Rolling Fast'!**

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The Organising & Resources Committee of Make Poverty History NE has unanimously backed JDC's 'Drop the Debt Fast'. We ask *all* our supporters, first, to observe a 'demonstrative fast' on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> May, the actual 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jubilee 2000's 70,000-strong 'Human Chain' in Birmingham, and, second, to participate in the 36-day 'rolling fast', as suggested below.

- Please register your participation, and get more information, at  
[www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/fast](http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/fast)
- Please write one letter to the Prime Minister, well before 18<sup>th</sup> May, using the draft provided below.

*"What is the purpose of such a fast?"* The impact of a demonstrative fast was most vividly shown by Ghandi, as a form of both protest and identification with those suffering injustice. It also has a personal impact, reminding one throughout the time involved of those for whom we stand.

*"What do you mean by 'fasting'?"* A fast can take various forms – going without solid food for 24 hours, or from 8am until 8pm, for example; or eating normally, but drinking only water. [In any case, drink plenty and *don't* endanger your health!]

*"What is the connection with a 'religious fast'?"* There is no necessary connection, but religious believers should seriously consider devoting particular attention to prayer for the world's poor, and for our leaders, during the time of fasting. This may be personal (and confidential), or corporate for the encouragement of others.

Rt Hon Gordon Brown HonDCL MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1A 2AA

[DATE]

Dear Prime Minister,

### **Drop the Debt Fast!**

As a supporter of Make Poverty History North East, it is with great pleasure that I recall your visit [OR, it was with great pleasure that I heard about your visit] to our region to receive an honorary degree from Newcastle University, and the speech you gave on that occasion. I now write to you as a participant of Jubilee Debt Campaign's Debt Fast, in the run-up to the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jubilee's world-changing 'Human Chain' in Birmingham.

I am told that you first declared your support for Jubilee in a packed-out St Paul's Cathedral, on 7th March 1999, when you declared that:

*"Poor country debt is the great moral issue of our day... the greatest single cause of poverty and injustice across the earth... a burden imposed from the past on the present, which is depriving millions of their chance of a future... we must drop the debt and drop it now."*

I am naturally very pleased indeed to hear about the progress in bringing debt relief to more than twenty of the world's poorest countries. Everybody knows that if you had not championed this cause personally, little or nothing would have been achieved, despite all the 'sound and fury' of Jubilee 2000/Jubilee Debt Campaign! However, I have to say that, in the light of your words in 1999, the present situation is a sobering one.

First, debt relief has clearly been grossly inadequate, given that even the poorest countries (the 'Low Income Countries') are still spending more than \$100 million dollars *each day* in debt repayments.

Second, the attitude of the creditors (including Britain) is still totally unreasonable, involving an obstinate refusal to acknowledge that many of the debts are simply illegitimate, having resulted from lending (such as that to the brutal dictators who formally ran Liberia and Indonesia, for example) which was both financially irresponsible and morally reprehensible.

Third, the system for debt relief remains manifestly unjust, with its every aspect (eligibility, extent, timing, conditions) being determined by the creditors, with the debtors having no right of appeal whatever to independent adjudication.

On that heady occasion in St Paul's, you thanked campaigners for our "*vision of a new climate of justice across the world ... that will liberate nations from unsustainable debt.*" We still have that vision and it was re-affirmed by Jubilee Debt Campaign last year:

*"In a world where a child dies every three seconds because of poverty, we want to see a world where,*

- poor people and poor nations are set free from poverty*
- unjust and unpayable international debt is cancelled*
- debt relief is not used as an instrument of power and control*
- there are fair, democratic and open processes to deal with historic debt and prevent future crises*
- loans and debt repayments do not damage people, their communities and their environment*

*This is a vision of justice; this is a vision of Jubilee."*

I know you share this vision and therefore ask you to take up the challenge once again:

***'Pick up the Pace – Drop the Debt Fast!'***

Yours sincerely,

# The North East's Own 'Rolling Fast'

Here in the NE, we have our own rolling programme to cover all 36 countries, and suggest that supporters in each Parliamentary constituency take one (or two) examples, as shown below.

Berwick (Alan Beith)	Saturday 12 April	Liberia
Bishop Auckland (Helen Goodman)	Sunday 13 April	Nepal
Blyth Valley (Ronnie Campbell)	Monday 14 April	Bangladesh
Darlington (Alan Milburn)	Tuesday 15 April	Cambodia
Durham City (R. Blackman-W)	Wed 16 April	Belize
Durham N (Kevan Jones)	Thursday 17 April	Kenya
Durham NW (Hilary Armstrong)	Friday 18 April	Panama
Easington (John Cummings)	Saturday 19 April	Moldova
Gateshead E etc. (Sharon Hodgson)	Sunday 20 April	Grenada
Hartlepool (Iain Wright)	Monday 21 April	Papua New Guinea
Hexham (Peter Atkinson)	Tuesday 22 April	Haiti
Houghton le Spring, (Fraser Kemp)	Wed 23 April	Ukraine
Jarrow (Stephen Hepburn)	Thursday 24 April	Yemen
Middlesbrough (Sir Stuart Bell)	Friday 25 April	Angola
Middlesbrough S (Ashok Kumar)	Saturday 26 April	Ecuador
Newcastle Central (Jim Cousins)	Sunday 27 April	Philippines
Newcastle East (Nick Brown)	Monday 28 April	Egypt
Newcastle N (Doug Henderson)	Tuesday 29 April	Djibouti
Redcar (Vera Baird)	Wed 30 April	Vietnam
Richmond (William Hague)	Thursday 1 May	Marshall Islands
Sedgefield (Phil Wilson)	Friday 2 May	Tajikistan
South Shields (David Miliband)	Saturday 3 May	Peru
Stockton N (Frank Cook)	Sunday 4 May	Armenia
Stockton S (Dari Taylor)	Monday 5 May	Mongolia
Sunderland North (Bill Etherington)	Tuesday 6 May	Indonesia
Sunderland S (Chris Mullin)	Wednesday 7 May	Dominica
Tyne Bridge (David Clelland)	Thursday 8 May	Pakistan
Tynemouth (Alan Campbell)	Friday 9 May	Morocco
Tyneside N (Stephen Byers)	Saturday 10 May	Azerbaijan
Wansbeck (Denis Murphy)	Sunday 11 May	Georgia
Berwick (Alan Beith)	Monday 12 May	Tunisia
Bishop Auckland (Helen Goodman)	Tuesday 13 May	Lebanon
Blaydon (Dave Anderson)	Wednesday 14 May	Paraguay
Blyth Valley (Ronnie Campbell)	Thursday 15 May	Lesotho
Darlington (Alan Milburn)	Friday 16 May	El Salvador
Durham City (R. Blackman-W)	Saturday 17 May	Jamaica

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