

## ORAL CONCOURS 2015

### ANGLAIS - LVII

#### **Protesters try to force affordable housing up the election agenda**

Over 2,000 people are to rally in Westminster in a bid to force the shortage of affordable homes up the general election agenda amid fears neither the Conservatives nor Labour will make the housing crisis a campaign priority.

Tuesday's "Homes for Britain" event – the largest protest yet at successive governments' failure to address the shortage of affordable housing in the UK – comes as campaigners voiced disappointment at Labour's refusal to include housing on its five-point election pledge card and the social housing sector's fear that the Conservatives' campaigning is focused only on home ownership.

The national event follows a series of local protests against alleged "social cleansing" by landlords replacing affordable housing with more expensive units for sale. Campaigns at the New Era estate in east London and in Chelsea at the Sutton Estate have been backed by the comedians Russell Brand and Eddie Izzard respectively. On Tuesday night, Brand is set to lead a "sleep-over" at the threatened Sweets Way estate in Barnet.

Campaigners from across the country will converge on Westminster for a rally that will see speeches from the Conservative party chairman, Grant Shapps, the Ukip leader, Nigel Farage, and the Labour communities spokesman, Hilary Benn. Also addressing the crowd at the Methodist Central Hall will be Ken Loach, who made the film *Cathy Come Home* in 1966 about a family made homeless by eviction, as well as the heads of the TUC, Frances O'Grady, and CBI, John Cridland.

"Politicians are misreading the level of public concern about this issue," said David Orr, chief executive of the National Housing Federation which represents social landlords and helped organised the rally. "We are being offered palliatives instead of understanding the depth of this problem. Our failure to come up with a proper housing policy is now having a clear impact on our potential for economic growth and we can't allow that to happen any longer."

Sir Michael Lyons, the former BBC chairman who carried out a review on housing for Labour, last year said the nation needs at least 243,000 homes a year to keep up with the number of new households being formed, but over the last decade only an average of 137,000 homes a year have been built.

The rally organisers – who also include the Home Builders Federation, which represents housebuilders, and the Residential Landlords Association – are calling for the next government to draw up a plan to end the housing crisis within a generation in the first year in office after the 7 May poll.[...]

The NHF also released an analysis showing how property owners in London and the south-east benefited disproportionately from the housing boom since 2010 with 97% of all property wealth growth happening in those areas. It found London now holds more than a quarter of the nation's property wealth at £1.2 trillion. The figure is more than the north-east, north-west, Yorkshire and the Humber, and the east Midlands put together (£1.1 trillion).