

Thank you, Madam **Deputy Speaker**, for allowing me to make my **maiden speech** during this debate. First, I congratulate **Richard Drax** on an excellent and entertaining speech. Over the past few weeks I have listened to many maiden speeches, and each time I felt a pang of emotion as I listened to other new Members speaking with heartfelt pride about their new role and their determination to work for their constituents. I now speak with heartfelt pride myself. I am proud to stand here as a native of **North Tyneside** having the great honour of representing my fellow North Tynesiders as the first woman Labour MP for the area since **Margaret Bondfield** in 1926.

North Tyneside **constituency** underwent some boundary changes at the **general election**, so I find myself paying tribute to both the former MP and two colleagues in the House. The right hon. **Stephen Byers** represented the **constituency** for 18 years. Not only an able parliamentarian but an excellent **constituency** MP, he is held in high regard by the many constituents he helped.

Two wards from the **constituency** of my right hon. Friend **Mr Brown** have come back into North Tyneside. I know that my right hon. Friend and **Steve Byers** worked together on a number of issues, including the **Swan Hunter** campaign "Life for Swans" and most recently to help with the reinstatement of the Findus factory in Longbenton. I believe that the north-east is indebted to my right hon. Friend for the excellent work that he did in his role as **Minister** for our region. The evidence of his popularity as a **constituency** MP is there to see in the busy case load that I have inherited from him.

Riverside ward, where I spent the first 19 years of my life, has come into North Tyneside from the **constituency** of my hon. Friend **Mr Campbell**. My hon. Friend worked hard as a **Minister** in the last Government, and his success as an MP was confirmed with his fantastic **general election** victory, when he increased his **majority** despite the **Tory** party spending some of Ashcroft's millions over several years in a vain attempt to unseat him.

North Tyneside **constituency** stretches along the **River Tyne** from **North Shields** to Wallsend, through Killingworth, Benton and Longbenton to the former mining communities in **Seaton Burn**, Burradon, Annitsford and Camperdown. The people of North Tyneside have a sense of fairness, and their commitment to their area is demonstrated by the array of community groups that have developed over the years, from youth groups such as the Longbenton Youth Project to more established residents' groups such as the Burradon forum. We are particularly proud of our excellent schools, many of which have been enhanced and developed under Labour's Building Schools for the Future,

and we have our own college of further education, TyneMet, which has helped launch the careers of many North Tynesiders, including mine.

Modern business parks have brought employment into the area, and Tesco is about to create 1,000 jobs at Balliol business park. However, I, like many others in the area, am saddened that we are to lose the Twinings tea factory in North Shields. Despite a good campaign to save it, the company has decided to relocate to Poland, leaving its workers jobless. Everything must now be done to help those workers find suitable alternative work, and I know that the unions have started the process to help them through this difficult time.

North Tyneside has no shortage of cultural and industrial heritage, with famous sons including **Robert Stephenson**, **Robert Westall**, **Owen Brannigan** and Sting. The world of football has been graced with players like **Peter Beardsley**, **Alan Shearer** and **Michael Carrick**, who all started out at the famous Wallsend boys club. Wallsend is also home to the Roman fort Segedunum, which is a world heritage site and sits alongside the world famous Swan Hunter shipbuilding yard, which sadly closed in 1995. The former **Rising Sun** pit, where my late father-in-law, an overman, was in the last cage to leave the pit, now forms part of our countryside park.

On several occasions, I have listened to Members opposite mock when those of us with great mining and shipbuilding traditions tell of the devastating effects of the **Tory** cuts during the 1980s and 1990s. What they fail to understand is that those cuts were not simply about economic ruin for individuals, but dealt severe cultural blows to close-knit communities. I congratulate the **Labour Government** on trying to right those wrongs with positive policies during the last 13 years. I know that one of our best hopes to reinvigorate industry in North Tyneside is to invest in the wind turbine industry. Already my right hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne East and my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth have been working with Shepherd Offshore to that end, and I want to work with them to bring this modern, skilful and sustainable industry to our former shipyards.

I have hopes and aspirations for North Tyneside, but this debate shows that this Government will make the attainment of those aspirations a hard slog. Fuel poverty has been tackled on a large scale in North Tyneside, thanks to support from the previous Labour Government. As a councillor and former energy champion for the **constituency**, I saw the excellent work done, with the help of Eaga, to develop a strategy to combat fuel poverty with partners from all sectors. The introduction of the warm zone, under our previous elected Labour mayor, not only improved energy efficiency in residents' homes, but—because

the scheme included supporting people to access benefits-realised more than £1 million in extra benefits, to which people are rightly entitled. I only hope that the Government's green deal proposals will continue to deliver this level of success for those people still in fuel poverty in North Tyneside.

I cannot finish my **maiden speech** without reference to my former colleagues working in the **Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission**. As an administrative officer, I worked with the staff in manual payments at Longbenton until April this year. I know how committed these and other public sector workers are to delivering good services. As Members of this House, we are elected public servants and we should do all that we can to protect our colleagues across the public sector from Government cuts.

My commitment to North Tyneside is total. I will do all that I can to justify the trust that the people of North Tyneside have placed in me, and I will busy myself, in this House and in my **constituency**, to get the best deal possible for them.