

Transcript of the Rt Hon Frank Field MP's speech

Opening of the exhibition

Upper Waiting Hall, House of Commons

22 April 2013

Not so long ago, the House of Commons got itself into a normal frenzy to celebrate 200 years of the abolition of slavery. And yet, as you've heard, the number of slaves in this country is increasing, and the numbers of prosecutions and convictions are declining. What therefore, putting it in a different way to Anthony, what really are we asking you to do? I think presenting Anthony's programme in another way, there are three things. One is to follow your own lead and call a spade a spade. You are the first person with real stature who, instead of using this term trafficking, has actually talked about slavery. That gets over to people just what is actually happening in their midst. Secondly, what other countries have found of huge value is, if they have somebody who works with the government but which is outside to help drive the programme as a rapporteur. Those countries that have made most progress have actually followed that route. And then thirdly, to take this from the stage of immigration, being an immigration issue to being a human rights issue and a criminal issue. And our plea is you might consider, at some stage, introducing a draft Bill for which you've got huge agreement across the parties here and the organizations so we could bring together the best of the legislation we have in this country and for those slaves owners to know, for the first time ever, the real pressure is on them rather than, as you will know very shortly, the pressure being on the slaves themselves.

The Prime Minister, thank you!