

Ministers' fury over claim that poverty has doubled

THE proportion of families living below the poverty line has more than doubled over the past 30 years, according to a controversial taxpayer-funded report.

One in three homes now has a standard of living below the minimum level, it said, adding that millions have bad housing, no social lives, too little heating and too little food.

But it was dismissed as 'misleading' by the Government and con-

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trary to evidence that the number of people facing poverty has fallen substantially in the past 15 years. One of the surveys on which the report was based involved just 1,500 individuals.

It was produced by Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK – a group headed by academics at Bristol University – and paid for through the government's Economic and Social Research Coun-

cil. Instead of using the official definition of poverty, the researchers used their own 'minimum standards of living', a level worked out from surveys in which people are asked which of a basket of goods and services are necessary. 'The percentage of households who fall below society's minimum standard of living has increased from 14 per cent to 33 per cent over the last 30 years, despite the size of the economy doubling,' said the researchers.

According to their report, 5.5million adults go without essential

clothing, while 2.5million children live in damp homes. Around 1.5million children live in households that cannot afford to heat their home.

One in four adults has an income below what the researchers consider is needed to avoid poverty, while one in every six adults in paid work is poor. More than one in five had been forced to borrow in the past year to pay for day-to-day needs.

More than one in five adults and children were poor at the end of 2012, the report said, because they had a low income and were 'multiply deprived' – suffering from three or more deprivations such as a lack of food, heating and clothing due to not having enough money.

It added that 'the majority of children who suffer from multiple deprivations live in small families with one or two siblings, live with both parents, have at least one parent

Statistics tell another story

THERE are a number of areas in which the report's claims are disputed. They include:

- It ignored the official poverty line – those living on less than 60 per cent of average income – and substituted a measure worked out by asking people which of a basket of goods and services are necessary.
- State surveys say there are 1.4 million fewer individuals and 1.1 million fewer children in relative poverty since 1998/99.
- Official figures show incomes of the poorest fifth rising 19 per cent in real terms since 1995.
- The most recent Whitehall housing survey found 970,000 damp homes – down from 2.6million in 1996.

'Misleading picture'

who is employed, are white and live in England'.

The report was based on a series of specially-commissioned surveys, one in 2012 involving fewer than 1,500 adults, and another in the same year that involved just over 5,000 homes.

Professor David Gordon of Bristol University said: 'The coalition government aimed to eradicate poverty by tackling the causes of poverty. Their strategy has clearly failed.'

'The available high-quality scientific evidence shows that poverty and deprivation have increased since 2010, the poor are suffering from deeper poverty and the gap between the rich and poor is widening.'

The claims drew a scathing response from Whitehall. 'There is strong evidence that incomes have improved over the last 30 years, despite the misleading picture painted by this report,' said a source

close to Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith.

'The independent statistics are clear, there are 1.4 million fewer people in poverty since 1998, and under this Government we have successfully protected the poorest from falling behind, with a reduction of 300,000 children living in relative income poverty and 100,000 fewer children in workless poor families.'

'As part of our long-term economic plan, the Government is committed to tackling the root causes of child poverty.'

Last week Tory MPs accused Oxfam of supporting the Labour Party after it published a poster on poverty that read: 'The perfect storm... starring zero hours contracts, high prices, benefits cuts, unemployment, childcare costs.'

Holy Grail of stamp collectors sells for a record £5.6million

Daily Mail Reporter

THE world's rarest stamp has sold for a record £5.6million at auction.

The British Guiana One Cent Magenta – called the 'Holy Grail' by experts – went in just two minutes to an anonymous bidder in New York, Sotheby's said.

The price was the highest paid for a single stamp in an auction, even though it is just one inch by one inch in size and has not been seen in public since 1986.

The price was below the £6million to £12million that had been expected but Sotheby's vice-chairman David Redden said he was 'thrilled with the extraordinary, record-setting price'.

He added that it was 'truly great moment for the world of stamp collecting. That price will be hard to beat, and likely won't be exceeded unless the British Guiana comes up for sale again.'

As well as setting a world record price for a stamp, it was also the most expensive item by weight and size ever sold. The One Cent Magenta is the only major stamp absent from the British Royal Family's private Royal Philatelic Collection.

Allen Kane, director of the Smithsonian National Postal Museum in the US, said: 'You're not going to



Unique: The British Guiana

find anything rarer than this. It's a stamp the world of collectors has been dying to see for a long time.'

The stamp – the only one of its kind – was discovered in 1873 by Louis Vernon Vaughan, a 12-year-old boy of Scottish and Welsh descent who was living in British Guiana (now Guyana). It had been printed in 1856 by a newspaper publisher in the colony after the local post office ran out of stamps shipped from London.

Printed in black on magenta paper, the stamp features a sailing ship along with the colony's Latin motto 'Damus Petimus Que Vicissim' ('We give and expect in return'). The previ-

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£1.99 per pack



DULANO SELECTION
Black Forest Ham Slices
Matured for 12 weeks
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84.5p/100g, Chilled

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£1.69 per pack



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