

COMMONS TOUCH

Why awful Jungle camp mustn't be allowed to return



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MP for Dover
and Deal

ON Friday I went to Calais. I wanted to see for myself whether the French had kept their pledge to stop the Jungle migrant camp from returning.

For years they had allowed the camp to grow. By the summer of 2016 it was home to 10,000 people, including hundreds of children. And lurking in the shadows were criminal gangs preying on the vulnerable.

As the Jungle grew, so did the number of attacks on tourists and truckers on the approach road to the Port of Calais. Ruthless people traffickers, armed with anything from chainsaws to machetes, would launch burning trees across the road. They were putting people's lives at risk in reckless attempts to stop traffic so desperate migrants could clamber on board Dover-bound lorries.

No matter how many walls and fences were built, the problem never went away. It became clear the only way to tackle this problem would be to dismantle the camp for good.

So during the summer I fought harder than ever to get this done, working closely with the Calais authorities throughout. It was a long and



SQUALID: Conditions in the Jungle camp for thousands of vulnerable migrants were appalling

hard battle yet we never gave in. And in October last year the French Government caved in and work to clear the Jungle finally began.

Britain took in hundreds of cold and starving children, meaning they had a roof over their head and a warm bed at Christmas. Vulnerable people living in the camp were moved to centres across France, where they have sanitation and running water in place of the squalor of the Jungle.

We also took action to tackle the number of people reaching our shores on small craft. Too often we saw migrants land on the beaches of Dover and Deal.

Who knows how many were arriving undetected.

So security has been stepped up along our shore and the Jungle has been cleared. Yet the migrant crisis has not gone away. That's why I've been putting pressure on the French to make sure they stop any new camps from forming – before the first tent is pitched.

I was pleased to see on Friday that what was once a squalid camp of ramshackle tents and makeshift shops is now completely empty. It was hard to believe that just a few months ago, thousands of people were living here in

awful conditions.

So far the French have succeeded in keeping Calais clear. Yet we must all remain vigilant. The Jungle must never be allowed to return.

And in Dover we must invest in building a modern border – fit for Brexit Britain. That means using state-of-the-art technology, data sharing and surveillance to tighten security while keeping trade free flowing.

My top priority is making Brexit work for Dover and Deal. We must start by strengthening our borders and working to make sure the Calais Jungle is gone for good.

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

One candle can never banish darkness, but a multitude can

TODAY the Christian church ends the 40 days of celebrating Christmas with the final feast of the season – the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. For many centuries the festival has had an association with candles; indeed, it is often known as Candlemas.

Candles have a quality which few other forms of lighting possess. In part, this quality lies in the gentle mellow illumination which they afford. In part it lies in their fragility: they are so easy to put out that we value their light all the more. But I think we value candlelight most of all because it is so relatively



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feeble. It reaches out into the dark and provides a little pool of security; and that pool of security means all the more to us because we are well aware of the shadows and of the darkness which still lurk all around us.

And that, if you come to think of it, is an apt description of the Word made flesh. When God came into the world as man, he did not come in power but in weakness. We

cannot comprehend the wonder of Jesus' eventual victory over the forces of evil unless we appreciate that his was a battle of the weak against the strong, and that weakness could win only through the total defeat represented by the cross. The candle was blown out; and then, and only then, the sun rose.

If we think of the human Jesus as a candle shining in the darkness, we are better able to appreciate what God's call to each of us means. In so far as we are Christians, we are candles; but we must not expect that our personal candle will drive the darkness clean away. The best we can

hope for is that our small light will not be put out. It will shine on and enlighten both ourselves and those immediately around us. The wider task of putting all things right lies in the eternal providence of God.

But there is also another thing to be said. One candle can never banish darkness, but a multitude can. In the same way, it is our fellowship in the church which drives evil to the outskirts of our lives. Churchgoing is a picture of this truth. By our coming together we affirm the truth, that it is in the common life in the body of Christ that the world's darkness is robbed of its power to press in on us.

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