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THE ARCHBISHOP IS WOEFULLY OUT OF TOUCH ON POVERTY AND WELFARE

THERE was a superb and heartbreaking documentary about child poverty in Britain on BBC1 on Tuesday evening, *Poor Kids*, that should have been compulsory viewing for the political class.

But clearly it wasn't because when David Cameron was asked about it in Prime Minister's Questions he started rambling on about foreign aid. At least Mr Cameron then realised his mistake and set out his stall on how tackling child poverty was not just a matter of transferring more and more taxpayers' money to the workless parents of deprived youngsters. "The biggest challenge today is not just

benefit levels but mobility – how do we help people get out of poverty and stay out of poverty?" he said. How indeed?

My own feelings watching the programme were not just that society is letting down these youngsters but a boiling frustration about the irresponsibility of adults who bring into the world children they are unable to provide for.

Nothing could reduce child poverty faster than a widespread recognition that having children is not something that ought to be done until a couple is confident it can support them financially and emotionally.

But there is no doubt the welfare system

encourages the poorest to have extra children, not just because of the extra benefit cheques that follow but also because it provides extra points to move them further up the very long social housing queue.

A woman like Karen Matthews, who never worked a day in her life, was on benefits of hundreds of pounds a week and had free housing too. But that did not prevent her children from going without meals.

I can only assume that such thoughts have never even occurred to the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams for he attacked the coalition for presiding over "a quiet

resurgence of the seductive language of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor".

I spoke to one very senior Labour figure this

week who told me the restoration of such a distinction was exactly what the voters who had abandoned his party wanted to see.

Thousands of them have complained bitterly to the party's policy review about slogging away at work while their taxes are spent on the feckless.

Once even the Labour Party stands ready to turn off the money tap on the shirking classes, Dr Williams will cut an even more ludicrous figure than he does now.

