

Lawson says jobs are plentiful

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By Anthony Bevins, Political Correspondent

Mr Nigel Lawson, Chancellor of the Exchequer, said last night that there were plenty of job vacancies available for the unemployed, but that some people were making the deliberate calculation that they were better off on the dole.

He said on Channel 4's *Face the Press* programme that no Whitehall discussions had yet taken place on the scale of future upratings unemployment benefit despite suggestions that the Government is planning to reduce the real level of benefit.

"The fact is that it is not possible to give a guarantee on any particular uprating of unemployment benefits", he said. "It will have to be judged each year in the light of all the circumstances.

"In an uncertain world there is a limit, inevitably, to the number of things that can be guaranteed. Any government that claims you can guarantee everything is a fraudulent government and should not be trusted."

Mr Lawson gave an indication of his inclination, however, when he said: "There can be no doubt whatever that at the margin there are people, even in present circumstances, who take a rational decision that it is not worth their while taking a job at the sort of pay at which jobs may be on offer."

Any review would take account of the need for public expenditure economy as well as the need to provide an incentive to work, he said.

Asked where the jobs were to be found, he replied: "I think that there are many jobs of an unskilled nature which are available to be done at a particular wage".

Mr Lawson's remarks are certain to provoke strong reaction from the Labour Opposition in the Commons. Mr Denzil Davies, a contender for the Labour deputy leadership, said yesterday that any curtailment of benefit would heap further deprivation and indignity on the unemployed.