

Matthew Taylor - Report into Modern Workplace falls short on fixing a broken labour market

Matthew Taylor, chief executive of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, has now published his review into modern workplace practices. Both GMB and CWU have heavily critiqued aspects of the report as it falls short in fixing a system which sees 10 million UK workers trapped in precarious work.

Dave Ward, CWU General Secretary, said:

"For workers across the UK the labour market is like the Wild West," he stressed. *"Exploitation is exploitation whether it's in a sweatshop or at the end of an iPhone and the Taylor Review falls way short of addressing the problems workers face."*

"With six million people earning less than a genuine living wage, it is astonishing that this review is watering down workers' rights to the minimum wage. Far from creating a country that works for everyone, Theresa May is creating a country in which we work until we drop."

Dave concludes: *"The CWU is calling for an agreement on a common bargaining agenda, a trade union manifesto on what constitutes a new deal for workers and a well constructed plan including action to achieve it."*

"It's incumbent upon unions to step up, work together and deliver a new kind of trade unionism. We must make the future world of work the number one political issue and organise workers everywhere."

The report believes that the current categorisation of workers is particularly difficult to understand and suggests that, effectively



renaming some workers as "dependent contractors" will assist with this. Taylor rejects the idea that employment status in the ET should replicate that used by HMRC and be a binary choice between employee and self-employment. He does propose that any decision by HMRC that an individual is an employee should be requisite on an ET.

Tim Roache, GMB General Secretary, said: *"For millions of people the world of work is like the Wild West - people don't know if they are coming or going. Given the epidemic of precarious work in the UK, this report simply does not go far enough in fixing a broken system that gives employers the choice of whether to treat their workers fairly or not."*

"Action on the Gig Economy is overdue, but help for agency workers, those on zero hours or short hours contracts won't happen by

asking nicely or hoping bad employers find a moral compass down the back of the couch."

"We need regulations and proper enforcement - until we get that, we will all continue to pay for shareholder profits though lost tax revenue and the knock on effect poor work has for public services and our communities. Words on decent work are always welcome, but they're meaningless without determined action to back them up and challenge those who profit from insecurity."

The report rests firmly with the government and whether it intends to implement the proposals contained in the report. Theresa May has said very little about what her government intends to do as some of Taylor's proposals need changes to primary legislation.

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Government clamp-down on bogus holiday sickness claims

Government Ministers have announced measures to clampdown on bogus holiday sickness claims they say are driving up the price of taking the family abroad.

Reports earlier in the year stated “fraudulent” insurance claims of food poisoning by holidaymakers looking to recoup the cost of all-inclusive deals were leading to package deals being taken off the market.

In response to the reports, the Government now plans to introduce a series of caps on the cost of settling sickness claims to make their legal costs predictable to tour operators.

A system of “fixed recoverable legal costs”

already operates for claims affecting operators in England and Wales, but tour operators that sell holidays abroad are not currently covered.

If the Government is successful in extending the scheme to overseas holidays then tour operators will instead pay a prescribed sum depending on the value of the claim.

Tony Rupa, Head of CWU’s Legal Services says; *“This appears to be another knee-jerk reaction by a Government, led by the*

insurance lobby. First we had bogus whiplash and now we have bogus holiday sickness claims.” Says Tony.

“Instead of labelling everyone that has a car accident or falls ill on holiday as fraudsters, why don’t they tackle the real fraud and shoddy practises of claims companies that hawk people over the phone, package holiday firms hiking up prices during school holiday weeks and the insurance companies increasing your premiums.”

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Opposition parties pledge support for workers’ rights and unite against the Great Repeal Bill

The opposition engendered across the political spectrum upon the introduction of the Great Repeal Bill exposed just how weak the Government’s Parliamentary position is post general election.

Upon introduction in July, it became immediately clear that the Government face opposition to getting the bill through from Labour, the Liberal Democrats, the SNP, the Greens, Plaid Cymru and Tory remainers.

The bill, officially titled the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, will repeal the European Communities Act of 1972 and bring the decades of EU law onto the UK statute book.

Publication of the bill on 13 July 2017 was most remarkable for immediately exposing just how much opposition the Government face in getting it passed.

Labour says it will not support the bill in its current form and is demanding concessions in six areas, including the incorporation of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights into British law.

The party wants guarantees workers’ rights will be protected and also want curbs on the power of Government Ministers to alter legislation without full parliamentary scrutiny. *“Far too much of it seems to be a process where the Government... will be able to bypass Parliament,”* said Jeremy Corbyn. Labour leader. *“We will make sure there is full parliamentary scrutiny. We have a Parliament where the Government doesn’t have a majority, we have a country which voted in two ways on Leave or Remain. “The majority voted to leave and we respect that, but they didn’t vote to lose jobs and they didn’t vote to have Parliament ridden roughshod over.”*

The Liberal Democrats warned that the Government faces defeat, unless it agrees to concessions in areas including parliamentary scrutiny and workers’ rights. The Scottish and Welsh Governments have to give *“legislative consent”* to the bill before it can become law - something they have said they are not willing to do.

In a joint statement, first ministers Nicola Sturgeon and Carwyn Jones, described the bill as a *“naked power-grab”* by Westminster that undermined the principles of devolution.

They say the bill returns powers from Brussels solely to the UK Government and Parliament and “imposes new restrictions” on the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly.

The bill’s passage, which will begin in the autumn.



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