

# A Charter for Working People



**Labour**  
[www.labour.org.uk](http://www.labour.org.uk)

- Rebuilding our Party to Win for Labour
- A Modern Framework of Employment Rights
- Rebuilding Collective Bargaining
- A Strong Voice for Unions in The Labour Party
- A Living Wage
- Job Security and Equal Treatment for Agency Workers
- Modern Manufacturing, High Quality, High Skilled Jobs
- Strong Public Services
- Equal Pay
- Sensible Working Hours
- Affordable Housing

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## Labour at work

There is no doubt that the successful economic management of the economy by Labour since 1997 has benefited millions of working people across Britain. We cannot afford to be complacent though. We have to think about social cohesion and the vital importance of sharing the additional wealth we create. Our economy and labour market are changing, not always for the benefit of everyone. We cannot simply speak of 'globalisation' as a force over which we, as citizens, have no control. This just feeds disillusion, disengagement and insecurity as people feel their choices are shut down. In the worst case scenario it is leading to people turning to extremist groups such as the BNP, who seek to exploit this insecurity for their own dangerous ends.

When you look at modern Britain, one of the things that stands out is the emergence of an 'hour glass' economy – an increasingly polarised labour market. More than 10 million workers are still defined as manual workers – that's nearly 40% of all people in employment, and it rises to 15 million if you add in clerical and secretarial workers.

The major growth areas in the economy are in established services, as well as the new knowledge economy. There has been a slight rise in computer managers, software engineers and programmers, but the real growth has been in established services - sales assistants, data input clerks, store keepers, receptionists, security guards.



Alongside these there has been a massive expansion in cleaning and support workers in the service sector, and increased work among the caring occupations - for example, care assistants, welfare and community workers and nursery nurses. In short, the growth areas over the last fifteen years have been in traditional, often low paid jobs, many of which are carried out by women. On the top half of today's 'hour glass' or two-tier economy there has been an increase in highly paid jobs. At the bottom we have seen significant growth in low paid, routine and unskilled work. These developments have created the insecurities that many feel at work.

As a party we need to reassert our values - an injury to one is an injury to all and progress for some must be translated into progress for all.

Part of the historic role of the Labour Party was to articulate these insecurities and provide policy solutions. Moreover, it has been the historic role of the labour movement to fight inequality in all its forms. The task at hand is to ensure that our values, Trade Union and labour values, of solidarity, co-operation and the improvement of our quality of life through collective endeavour, provide many of the solutions to the challenges this country faces.

In this document I set out some ideas that I believe will help in this process. Critically, they will also help in rebuilding our party through confronting these modern insecurities at work. If I am elected deputy leader my immediate priority will be rebuilding the party and beating the Tories. Put simply, I believe that unless we take urgent steps to enthuse and remobilise the whole labour movement, we will not only lose our sense of purpose as a Party, but in the end we may be in danger of finding ourselves out of power and with very little Party left to rebuild.

# Employment Rights

The Warwick Agreement showed what can be achieved through positive dialogue between the unions and the Party. It enabled us to go into the last general election with a manifesto that reflected key workplace issues and gave trade union members an incentive to campaign for a Labour victory. We must ensure that the Warwick commitments are delivered in full in this third term. I believe, however, there is much further we can go to build on our record.

Trade union rights are not a charter for industrial militancy, just as civil liberties are not a charter for anarchy. They are there to ensure that there are limits to the exercise of power against the individual citizen, whether by the state or by an individual corporation. Working people need a framework of rights to enable them to stand up for their fair share of the wealth they help to create, otherwise the benefits of rising wealth and productivity will be distributed unequally. That is why I supported the Trade Union Freedom Bill.

I am a firm believer in trade unions as a force for social justice. Recent figures show that the UK is the least equal society in the EU. Since the 1990s there has been a rapid growth in the incomes of the top 1% who now own 23% of total wealth. According to the most recent Guardian survey, Directors' pay rose by 28% on average in 2006.

Labour has done a great deal for low income families but we must do more to fulfil our historic purpose of reducing inequality. Protection at work should be a central part of this strategy. A recent OECD report stated that 'a stronger bargaining power of trade unions is associated with lower relative poverty and income inequality' and that 'the bargaining power of the unions seems to have a role in limiting relative poverty.'

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## Insecurity at work

The Labour government since 1997 has introduced a whole new range of employment rights for working people. We should be proud of those achievements – from the National Minimum Wage, improvements in maternity and paternity leave, to non discrimination rights for part-time and fixed term workers. We should also be proud of our record on employment, consigning to the dustbin of history the disgraceful Tory lies that unemployment is the fault of the unemployed and a 'price worth paying' for keeping inflation down.

We must not forget that employment rights are useless to the unemployed. We need a labour market that is vibrant, accessible and high skilled. We must not, however, allow an 'any job is better than no job' philosophy to prevent us from addressing some fundamental questions about the kind of economy, the kind of jobs and the kind of society we want to create.

Many of the reforms since Labour came to power will be to no avail if other mechanisms are sought to deprive workers of their rights. Trade unions are reporting a significant rise in the use of agency work, often migrant labour in low paying sectors of the economy such as food processing, cleaning and hospitality. Arguably a modern race to the bottom is underway in many workplaces - that is why the government has to intervene.

Agency work is not just limited to low skilled and low wage areas of the economy. Manufacturing has one of the highest levels of use of agency workers in the economy and the construction and

If I am elected deputy leader I would support measures to help unions grow and to rebuild collective bargaining, especially in low paying sectors. As a first symbolic step ACAS should be given back their historic role of promoting collective bargaining, something removed by the Thatcher Government.

We have also seen the growth of the enforcement of individual rights and individual tribunal cases. This is an inefficient way of resolving issues at work. This also why I welcome the current review of facilities time for trade union representatives, another commitment given at Warwick.

It is vital that trade union reps are entitled to adequate cover for time off and that they get access to training. With well trained union reps, issues can be settled at work rather than at tribunal. Unions should also be able to take collective cases on behalf of members to avoid individuals losing out on their rights.

### If elected deputy leader I will focus on these key issues:

- full delivery of Warwick in this parliament
- a modern framework of employment rights in line with ILO conventions
- more support for trade union reps
- helping unions grow and rebuild collective bargaining
- open discussions between party and unions for a "Warwick 2" to include the policy suggestions contained in this document

printing industries have seen a dramatic shift to agency workers. As with lower paid sectors, the use of agency workers has been a means not just of suppressing wages but of undermining national collectively agreed rates and terms and conditions. The rise of agency work has also seen a corresponding decline in the numbers of core employees.

In all sectors of the economy where agency work has been used to reduce terms and conditions and, particularly where migrant workers are used and often abused, it is a source of potential conflict in workplaces and in communities.

The principle of equal treatment was agreed at Warwick and by TUC and Labour party conferences in 2006. It was a great disappointment to me that the Government prevented the recent Private Member's Bill on Temporary and Agency Workers progressing into law. I firmly believe that UK legislation is required in this parliament to deliver the Warwick commitment and to provide sufficient enforcement to make the legislation effective.

### If elected, I will focus on these key issues:

- support for UK legislation providing equal treatment for agency workers in basic terms and conditions
- better protection for agency workers

## Contract compliance and a living wage

Labour should be proud of the success of the National Minimum Wage. We successfully introduced it in the face of all the scare stories from the Tories, Liberal Democrats and employers' groups about how it would cost hundreds of thousands of jobs. The minimum wage has continued to rise and we have continued to create jobs. Women in particular have benefited from its introduction.

Labour should continue to do more for the working poor. Tax Credits should not be seen as a mechanism to subsidise low wages. The minimum wage should create a national benchmark under which no wages should fall, but I believe there is still more we can do.

There are tens of billions of pounds of public contracts negotiated every year. We should introduce a system of contract compliance in these public contracts to ensure model employment conditions, over and above the minimum statutory obligations, on pay, sick and holiday entitlements. This new model employment clause in public contracts would mean the government takes the lead in regulating its own supply chain and stops some of the abuses that are all too familiar in the modern workplace.

Moreover, this new public sector benchmark could inform and support discussions around regulating employment conditions in the private sector, like the active Living Wage campaigns that are ongoing in many of our cities.



## Working time and family friendly policy

Labour has a proud record on family friendly rights since 1997. Maternity pay has been extended, new dads have paternity leave, parental leave and the right to request flexible working have been introduced but there is much more we can do.

Families still struggle with housing and childcare costs and often both parents have to work long hours, placing stress and strain on family life. Although, under Labour, the working hours of men have decreased slightly, the working hours of women have increased. Additionally, many low paid workers in the casual economy have to hold down more than one job to make ends meet. A recent CIPD survey showed that a quarter of workers now work long hours compared to one in ten in 1998.

I believe Labour should move beyond the mantra of 'choice' when it comes to working hours. The issue is more complex than that and it affects workers' health and quality of life. The Government should end the opt out from the EU Working Time Directive.

Reductions in working time should go hand in hand with measures to provide for cheaper housing and more childcare support so that lower income families can spend more quality time together.

The persistent gap in pay between men and women is an injustice that must be addressed. The gap is around 17% overall but is far wider, nearer 40%, for women who work part time. Given the growth in part time working this embedded discrimination must be addressed. The Government's Women and Work Commission

report provided 40 recommendations to address this but significantly did not include mandatory pay audits or statutory rights for equality reps. Both of these need to be considered as part of a new 'Warwick 2' agreement.

The Government has also introduced a general duty in the public sector to promote race and disability equality and a similar duty to promote gender equality is being introduced. These duties could be extended to the private and voluntary sectors and cover all strands of equality.

A Single Equalities Act will provide the mechanism to deliver the changes needed.

### If elected, I will focus on these key issues:

- a Single Equalities Act to simplify and improve existing equalities laws
- equal pay audits
- low cost housing and childcare for low income families
- more support for carers
- improving access to training for carers who have to take time out of the labour market

## Europe

In the dark years of Tory rule Europe was the single source of employment rights. In many areas it provided the only protections that workers could rely on.

The Labour government has not done enough to build and promote the progressive work of the EU. Too often the government has resisted the extension of the social model and the proactive encouragement of unions and employers reaching agreements on developing new rights.

The government's response to the Temporary and Agency Workers Directive has been a clear example of why things need to change. This Directive could provide much needed protection to a vulnerable group of workers but the government has worked behind the scenes in Europe to make the directive unworkable and unacceptable to the unions and many European governments.

Labour MEPs have played an important role in delivering the social agenda at a European level. Their work in amending the Services Directive ensured that existing hard won UK legislation was not undermined. Our Labour MEPs work with the sister socialist parties in the European Socialist Parties group (PES)

across Europe. More needs to be done to support them in this, too often they find that the UK Government pushes them to work against their European colleagues on progressive social legislation.

The EU gets a very bad press. When employment rights are delivered at a European level then the UK government takes the credit for them, however they are quick to blame the EU for unpopular legislation. I am keen to build a wider understanding of the importance of the EU and the benefits of the European Social Model.

**If elected, I will focus on these key issues:**

- end to the opt out from the EU working time directive
- bring in the temporary and agency workers directive
- promote a modern 'Social Europe' agenda
- support for MEPs' work within the PES

## High quality public services

Labour in government has been winning the argument on the need for properly funded public services. To continue winning this crucial debate, however, a debate on the role of private companies in the Public Sector needs to be had and settled.

There are some services that simply need to be provided by the state, and if 'what matters is what works' then local authorities need to be given more freedom to get the investment and to experiment with new forms of service delivery that do not necessarily involve private sector provision.

We need to reinvigorate Local Government and local participation in politics. This is unlikely to happen if people believe that they have little influence over the way services are provided because service provision is tied up in long term contracts with the private sector. The contracting process can also be too prescriptive in the way it lays down in fine detail the way a service is provided. We need to promote flexibility, not restrict it.

We need to win the arguments on continued investment in front line services, rather than creating the impression that extra investment goes into the bureaucracy of implementing a never ending stream of reforms. It is right and proper that a part of that investment is to provide decent terms and conditions and pensions for public sector workers, as it is vital that our public services recruit and retain high quality, committed staff. It is also vital that Labour works in partnership with public sector workers on service improvement, rather than alienating them through imposed changes.

Importantly, collectively provided universal public services are important to our sense of social cohesion (the BBC and Post Office are good examples of this).



**If elected I will focus on these key issues:**

- a thorough independent review of private involvement in public services to look at value for money and at ways of increasing democratic accountability
- a reform and inspection regime for local government that allows local authorities to provide solutions other than privatisation
- support for a decent pensions settlement for public sector workers
- opposition to post office privatisation

## Housing

Labour has not done enough to address this country's housing problems; it is as simple as that. If I am elected deputy leader this will be a policy priority for me. Housing is not just a stand alone policy area - it is central to issues of social inequality and poor housing impacts on health, education and crime.

Labour inherited a £19 billion backlog of repairs and tremendous progress has been made with the Decent Homes Standard. The trouble is there is now just not enough affordable housing available for working people. The shortage of housing had led to social divisions in areas such as my constituency of Dagenham where immigrants are seen as competitors for scarce resources. This, of course, has been and will continue to be, exploited by the BNP unless we urgently address some of these issues.

The 'right to buy' scheme was popular with many working class families, but it should have released money to local authorities to allow them to invest in new social housing. There is no need for Labour to inherit the Tory ideological opposition to public housing. Many working people want to live in public housing - hence the many 'no' results in transfer ballots. Neither does public housing have to be unimaginative, low quality, poorly maintained or crime ridden.

What is clear is that rising housing costs are in danger of leaving a generation of low to middle income families behind as they fail to get on the property ladder, and widening social divisions. In fact the situation has got so bad that 'key worker' schemes have been introduced to enable vital public sector workers to be able to afford to live near their workplace, and many can't even afford part shares. This is a problem that cannot simply be left to the free market.

### If elected, I will focus on these key issues:

- **argue for the 'fourth option' for council housing, allowing councils to retain and invest in existing and new housing stock**
- **more stringent planning regulations requiring property developers to build affordable housing**
- **more part buy schemes**

## Manufacturing and quality jobs

The manufacturing sector is vital to the UK economy, not just in terms of our balance of payments figures, but because manufacturing provides highly skilled, highly paid jobs for communities. This is why, in my own constituency, I campaigned hard with trade unions to retain manufacturing at the Ford plant. If Dagenham had lost the whole plant it would have had devastating effects on an already deprived community. In Dagenham we lost car assembly but invested in our capacity to build engines. Others have been less fortunate, as we have recently seen with the closure of the Peugeot plant at Ryton.

An Amicus survey has shown that 20% of former Rover workers are now earning the equivalent of the national minimum wage. Since 1978 the proportion of service sector jobs in Britain has grown from 62% of the total to 82%, while manufacturing employment has gone from 28% to 12%.

It is easier to dismiss UK workers than other European workers. We are far from having a level playing field. But before reaching the point of redundancies there should be more support from the Government for manufacturing. Government investment in UK industry is behind that provided to competitors across the EU and it is no coincidence that other EU countries have not seen the same level of decline in manufacturing employment that the UK has suffered.

Public contracts are also far more liberalised in the UK than across the EU. The government could be considerably more proactive in supporting and promoting UK manufacturing domestically through these contracts. This would also provide UK companies with the opportunity to build markets internationally through developing their capacity, research and expertise in the area of public procurement.

This agenda is not about protectionism, it is about the active promotion of high quality UK manufacturing and securing high quality jobs for future generations.

### If elected I will focus on these key issues:

- **better use of public procurement to protect vital UK capabilities**
- **government support for key industries - including energy, aerospace and green manufacturing**

## Redundancy and consultation

When Marks and Spencer attempted to close their Paris store they met strong union opposition backed up by legislation and as a result M&S is still open in Paris. The same result would not have been likely in the UK. The consultation laws in France ensured those jobs are still in existence. How many jobs have been lost in the UK because we do not have the same protection in place?

In the UK the social consequences of employers' decisions are not included in any consultation. The Information and Consultation directive, as it appears in UK law, falls short of the protection provided across the EU. There must be greater consultation with unions at an earlier stage and with sufficient sanctions against employers to ensure they cannot plough ahead with plans regardless of the consultation process.

The Warwick agreement also provided for an increase in the level of statutory redundancy payments. I want to see these brought up to the original value of the payments when they were introduced in 1965. The level should then be protected by an annual increase in line with average earnings to ensure the erosion that we have seen is not repeated.

If elected I will focus on these key issues:

- increase of the level of redundancy payments, as pledged in the Warwick agreement
- reform of the law on insolvency and collective redundancies
- strengthening of consultation processes before any decision on redundancies

## Pensions

Labour needs to do more for pensioners. We have an ageing population and pensions should be solid Labour territory. Never again must we allow ourselves to be outflanked by the Tories on pension issues. Their legacy is the breaking of the link with earnings, the pensions mis-selling scandal and pensioner poverty – we need to keep reminding the British people that the Tories can never be trusted on this issue.

I support and welcome many of the current pension proposals. Trade Unions have won many of the arguments – we are restoring the link with earnings and there should be compulsory employer contributions. If I am elected deputy leader I will argue for the National Pensions Saving Scheme to be kept in the public sector. We also have to ensure that young people pay into pension schemes.

Labour has acted to help those workers who have lost out as a result of pension scheme closures. The Financial Assistance scheme should be fully funded and I welcome the announcement in Gordon Brown's budget of extra assistance for pensioners who have lost out.

Demographic change presents us with economic challenges but we must remember that the wealth in the economy increases at a greater pace than the increase in ageing population. It is only right that pensioners share in the rising wealth of the economy.

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If elected, I will focus on these key issues:

- more assistance for women who suffer worse pensions after taking time out to care for their families or because they are more likely to work part-time and be low paid
- ensure that the earnings link is restored in 2012
- campaign for compulsory contributions to be made by employers and employees throughout their working lives so people can afford to enjoy a happy and dignified retirement

## Trade unions and the Labour Party

Without the link between the Unions and the Party, there would be no labour movement, and no Labour Government. The Labour Party was created to be the voice of ordinary working people in Parliament and in Government. This is the very bedrock of democracy in the UK – that Parliament would not simply reflect the voice of the powerful vested interests of wealth and privilege.

It is vital that this link is rejuvenated so that Labour can truly be the voice of all classes and communities. This is not an issue of block votes at conference, and who has seats on what body. Most ordinary working people, even many trade union activists, don't see these issues as relevant to their workplace, or their lives.

This is why, if we are to revitalise our movement, we have to look outward and address the issues of real relevance to working people – housing, better protection at work, shorter working hours, pensions. We must re-engage at the grassroots level. The Labour Party must organise around issues that are relevant to working people if it is to grow and be re-elected.

**If elected, I will focus on these key issues:**

- **no change in the constitutional position of the unions in the Party, including party conference, unless supported by the unions themselves**
- **rejection of any party funding proposals that would weaken the union link and hand the Tories a spending advantage**
- **joint campaigning around issues by trade union branches and local Labour Parties**
- **encouragement of party/union liaison posts at ward level**
- **Party and unions to engage in joint membership campaigns**

## Unions in communities

The unions, along with faith and interest groups, have led the way on campaigning and reaching out to certain sections of the community. The Labour Party has a lot to learn from them.

TELCO's campaign for a living wage, for example, developed a broad based coalition and reached out to people who may not otherwise come into contact with trade unions. We can also learn from other community based campaigns like that run by Searchlight against the BNP.

The point is that the party has suffered steep decline. We have lost 200,000 members in the last ten years and hundreds of councillors and this has affected our capacity both to campaign and to win elections.

I believe that electioneering has to be complemented by activity focused on local, national and international issues – from a living wage and the need for new affordable housing to the environment and decent rights at work.

There is a view in the party that this is the inevitable consequence of the modern world and that we are experiencing the end of direct participation in the political process. But I regard the fact that people of all ages are still joining, and are actively involved in other, particularly liberal, organisations such as Amnesty as evidence that what they have become alienated from is the Labour Party in its current form.

I don't accept the premise of 'virtual parties' but ones rooted in communities where members are fully represented within its institutions and policy making structures, and if Labour is to prosper again as a member based organisation, we have to create new links with wider society and actively organise and mobilise people as many of the unions are doing.

This is not an isolated debate or exercise. Restoring party democracy is critical to our reconnection with the wider electorate, not to mention our ability to effectively campaign and to represent people on the ground.

The renewal and democratisation of the party depends on the reinvigoration of party structures and increased member involvement and participation in decision making. All these are key to encouraging people to join and become active and are also imperative in terms of policy making.

I firmly believe that the party's organisational breakdown and failure to involve members has led us to pursue some policies that have been unpopular with our membership and the wider electorate.

The urgent need to rebuild is the primary reason I am standing for the position as deputy leader of the Labour Party. There is a great deal to be done, which is why, if elected, I would turn down any offer of being Deputy Prime Minister or government job in order to dedicate myself 100% and full time to the job in hand.

- **to be a full-time deputy leader dedicated to rebuilding the party from its grassroots**
- **ring-fence funding for local parties so they can choose how to spend their money**
- **the reintroduction of local organisers**
- **overhaul the policy making process of the Party**