

## **Employment and Employment Rights**

Workers need jobs. The financial crisis has led to mass unemployment, with youth unemployment a national scandal. We need investment in the economy to create jobs and apprenticeships that can help us to improve economic prosperity, tackle the housing crisis and improve public services. Labour should also build on the minimum wage by introducing a better statutory living wage. The high and low pay commissions evidenced the corrosive effects of both high and low pay in our society. Labour must therefore tackle growing differentials in pay and inequality of income, which the Equality Trust believes makes everyone poorer in terms of worse health outcomes and life expectancy, lower overall prosperity and the greater incidence of crime. Better employment rights also enables greater fairness and equality between different groups in society. We need to raise the standards on family friendly rights, caring responsibilities and work-life balance to aid a fully diverse workforce and hence a more equal society.

The growing imbalance of power in the workplace between employers and their workers is leading to a number of problems. Union membership is still declining, especially in the private sector. Shrinking union membership, and anti-union employers, means collective bargaining strength in the workplace is declining. With the share of income going to labour, as opposed to capital, also reducing. Meanwhile, income inequality between the highest and lowest paid is growing. Moreover, “flexibility” at work is leading to a race to the bottom in terms of workers’ pay and conditions of employment. It is therefore clear that workers need better collective rights in order to get a fairer deal in the workplace. Trade union freedom actually enhances our civic democracy. Therefore a future Labour government should:

- Introduce full employment rights for all workers from day one of employment.
- Grant the right to reinstatement of employees who win Employment Tribunals against their dismissal.
- Abolish fees for all applicants to the Employment Tribunals.
- Reinstated all employment rights abolished by the current Coalition Government including: unfair dismissal, redundancy pay, flexible hours, training and maternity rights.
- Enact fairer trade union recognition legislation, where if a majority of employees want collective bargaining through a trade union with their employer it is granted.
- Amend the law on balloting union members prior to industrial action so that where a majority of members vote for industrial action, this democratic decision cannot then be undermined by the employer using court injunctions about administrative aspects of the balloting process that would not have affected the actual result.
- Allow the option for union ballots on industrial action to be held in the workplace.
- Introduce a new legislative provision to allow workers working for the same company, who however may not all be employees of that company, to take industrial action on matters that they have an interest in.