

The Great Jobs Agenda, TUC

Chair: Stephen Bush, New Statesman; Rebecca Long-Bailey MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy; Frances O'Grady, General Secretary, TUC; Steve Turner, Assistant General Secretary, Unite the Union

Long-Bailey starts the talk by accusing Theresa May of always falling back on the high rate of employment when questioned about the cost of living crisis, people using food banks, etc... Long-Bailey claims that these figures hide poor productivity growth, insecure work and falling wages. She goes on to explain these three points.

Long-Bailey claims that the productivity crisis has been caused by lack of infrastructure, skills, research and development and that Britain is one of the worst investors in skills in Europe. She also speaks of the upcoming risk of automation.

Long-Bailey goes on to say that Labour wants to create a National Education Service that would provide lifelong skills training for all. In order to put a stop to the lack of investment in infrastructure, Labour pledges to spend at least 3% of GDP, on par with other countries such as Germany. Labour would also ensure encourage the private sector to invest, which would create jobs in Britain.

To tackle the problem of job insecurity Long-Bailey talks about Labour's 20-point plan. She lists a few points: all workers would have equal rights from day one; introduce a real living wage; ban zero-hour contracts; measures against bogus self-employment; abolish tribunal fees in order to implement these policies; right of workers to be represented by their trade union; investment in the enforcement of these rights with the creation of a new Ministry of Labour; repeal the Trade Union Act; roll back collective sector bargaining to encourage the membership of trade unions.

Long-Bailey claims that with measures such as the ones she has mentioned, it is possible for Britain to lead the fourth revolution.

Frances O'Grady starts speaking about the big growth in casualisation and the negative aspect of zero-hour contracts, sham self-employment; she refers to Uber and congratulates Sadiq Khan and TfL on their win.

O'Grady claims that workers are on average worse off now than before the financial crash in real terms. She refers to the Great Jobs Agenda as an ambitious agenda. She goes on to explain what it means: the right to a great job, the right to a voice at work, to be safe, to have guaranteed and regular hours, the chance to train, learn, progress, to right to fair pay.

O'Grady talks about the challenges facing the job market: new technology, Brexit and that the review of workers' rights is vital to overcoming these challenges.

O'Grady goes on to criticise the fact that Theresa May delivered a speech in Florence and talked about the hypocrisy of certain members of her Cabinet, who, O'Grady claims, do not want workers' rights to change (refers to the talk of Britain becoming a deregulated off shore tax haven), despite stating the opposite. She refers to Boris Johnson talking about Brexit being an opportunity to dump the social chapter.

Steve Turner, the final speaker, talks about the existence of millions of people who are in precarious situations, on zero-hour and short-hour contracts. He gives the example of Santander who have employees on 12-hour a year contracts. Turner also talks about the gig economy and people being allocated work on a smart phone, being sacked via text. These people have no contact and no relationship with their employer. There is no process, no appeal, no procedure to follow. Turner concludes by talking of the need to redefine work. He states that casual work is a major factor in the increase of suicides in the UK.