

## Brown expected to change position on agency workers directive

On January 30, 15 Labour backbenchers met with Gordon Brown in an attempt to reverse the Government's position on the [Agency Workers Directive](#): European legislation which would cause all contractors to be treated like employees thus raising costs to British business by about 9 billion pounds each year.

### It Will Cost Us All

To see just how much it will cost all of us, take a look at the [Agency Workers Directive Calculator](#) on our site.

More than 100 Labour backbenchers are threatening a revolt if the Government does not allow the Agency Workers Directive to become law across Europe. Until now, the UK has blocked this draft legislation from becoming European law.

Labour MP Jon Trickett has insisted repeatedly on the dangers of the "casualisation of the labour force." Trickett has complained that the Royal Mail no longer makes proper deliveries in his constituency because of the use of temporary workers. Contractors of course work at an entirely different level from temporary workers of the type Trickett indicates, but there is no evidence that these backbenchers intend to make any distinction between IT programmers or engineers, and waiters and messengers.

Business Secretary John Hutton, who helped keep the Directive from becoming law in December, has insisted that the UK would not accept a directive which would drastically affect temporary workers and contractors.

But the Government is losing ground in the battle. Driven by the need to get ratification for the European Treaty through Parliament, there is real reason to fear that Brown will change his position. Labour backbenchers are proposing separate bills that would effectively implement the directive, and tabling amendments to the Government's Employment bill, currently in the Lords, that would have the same effect.

“ Nearly 100 Labour MPs will revolt if the Government does not change its position on the Agency Workers Directive ”

Jon Trickett - Labour MP

### What Are The Consequences?

What are the consequences of the Agency Workers Directive which will impose employment on vast numbers of contractors?

The Directive is an attempt by the European Commission in Brussels to impose the same rules on all contractors and temp workers all over Europe, and these rules mean that contractors would be treated like employees, required to receive holiday pay, sick pay, etc. -- all the costly benefits employees get. The Directive was blocked in a meeting of the Council of Ministers (which makes all these laws), but it is dangerously close to being passed as the UK and only a few other Member States oppose it.

### It's All Too Casual

Labour MPs take the view that work is becoming too casual. Says Labour MP Andrew Miller: "there are 1.4 million agency workers in the UK, and agency workers are sometimes employed to undercut permanent workforces, creating divisive conditions and resentment; we call on the Government to take appropriate action to establish the principle of equal pay and conditions for agency workers compared with their permanent counterparts." Miller has made an Early Day motion in Parliament on this subject.

Contractors should now contact their MPs and let them know that this issue is a fundamental one for us, and that they should vote against any obligatory extension of employee rights to contractors.

“ Agency workers are sometimes employed to undercut permanent workforces creating divisive conditions and resentment ”

Andrew Miller - Labour MP

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