

Labour Youth Submission to the Minister of State for Business and Employment at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise, and Innovation, Minister Ged Nash TD

Labour Youth has campaigned consistently for an end to precarious work, and specifically zero hour contracts, since November 2013. It has been noted by many that without the campaign from Labour Youth on this issue, it might not have reached the national agenda. The study into the effects of these contracts by the University of Limerick, commissioned by Minister of State for Business and Employment, Minister Ged Nash, came as welcome progress in achieving better standards for employment in Ireland. With the results of this study outlining the serious effects of *If and When Contracts*, Labour Youth believes that it is time to prioritise legislation to end the use of these contracts and further protect our workers.

Labour Youth wishes to continue in its role of lobbying on the use of precarious contracts and to continue to be the voice that calls for this legislation. The introduction of the following measures into new legislation on If and when Contracts will vastly improve the rights of workers in country. The Labour Party has vastly improved the rights of workers in the term of this government. We have tackled low pay with two minimum wage increases and a commitment to a living wage in public bodies in our manifesto for 2016. We have legislated to ensure that collective bargaining can be used to its full advantage and reintroduced the Joint Labour Committees and Registered Employment Agreements to compliment this. Tackling the prevalent use of precarious contracts remains an area which needs to be addressed. With the general election in the coming few months, it is crucial that the Labour Party uses this opportunity to ensure that our record on workers' rights in this government is effectively legislated for, not only to further our own achievements in this government, but to protect workers for the future.

Proposals for Legislation to End If and When Contracts

Labour Youth's proposals reiterate the recommendations of the University of Limerick study. We believe these points are crucial in order to achieve the most effective legislation in protecting workers. There are three main points of which we assert must be included when legislating against *If and When Contracts*

A minimum notice period to start work of 72 hours.

Labour Youth recognises the difficulties that employees face when they are not given adequate notice of their work hours. It has become evident that employers often give workers one day of notice before beginning work, sometimes less. Workers should be able to organise their lives with prior notice of working hours. Being given less than 72 hours notice does not give workers adequate notice, particularly those workers with children. Workers with children need to be given notice to ensure there is childcare available while they are at work. In legislating effectively to end the use of precarious work, it is crucial that all workers are given this minimum notice period.

A minimum amount of guaranteed hours based on the previous six months work.

Labour Youth notes that workers can be given different numbers of working hours each week. This use of unpredictable hours not conducive to a stable work environment and does not allow for future planning on the part of employees. Labour Youth believes that a minimum amount of guaranteed hours should be introduced in order to ensure that employees can continue to enjoy stable finances without the fear of uncertainty dictating their every purchase. A basic contract which provides a stable and consistent number of guaranteed hours will provide workers with the certainty they need in order to plan their expenses.

A minimum consecutive three hour shift.

Labour Youth acknowledges with concern the use of short shifts by employers. It is important that employees receive a minimum set of hours to ensure that they earn enough to live outside poverty. Working hours of three consecutive hours allows for secure finances. A shift which is less than three hours of work per day does little more than cover the cost of transport to and from a place of work. It is essential that this is included in legislation to end the use of precarious contracts.

Better for Workers, Better for Business

Labour Youth fundamentally believes that legislating against the use of If and When Contracts benefits both workers and their employers. Workers gain quality employment, with guaranteed hours, minimum shifts, and enough notice in order to plan the rest of their lives, while employers gain a happy and motivated workforce. Quality employment is essential in ensuring that workers live a high quality of life that enables them to function as something other than an employee. The Labour Party has proudly improved workers' rights during this term of government and legislating against If and When Contracts is another key part of that legacy.

An end to If and When Contracts is also beneficial to employers. Employers who take care of the needs of their employees ultimately reap the rewards from having a dedicated team of workers. Precarious work also inevitably leads to a high turnover in workers, this increases cost for employers as they must train new staff and it will take time for them to become as experienced as other staff. Being able to keep a highly trained and experienced staff will ensure minimal costs and increase efficiency. With a more secure workforce, employers can benefit from a highly-skilled and experienced workforce, increasingly productivity overall. Employers will benefit by implementing a routine for their employees as the workplace will become more efficient

We reiterate the urgency of legislating to end the use of If and When Contracts. In this crucial time before the general election, it is vital that we once again display our commitment to the rights of workers in Labour's fight for equality.

For more information contact:

Grace Williams, Labour Youth National Chairperson
lychair@labour.ie

Hazel O'Driscoll, Labour Youth Policy and Education Officer
lyeducation@labour.ie