

## [Deregulate the labour market](#) [1]

Written by [Anton Howes](#) [2] | Wednesday 18 February 2009



On the 9th of February, Christopher Chope, Conservative MP for Christchurch presented his Ten Minute Rule Bill to the House of Commons, amid no fanfare whatsoever. His Bill went unnoticed by political commentators and was largely ignored by all but a few of his friends, some quietly dozing MPs, and those such as myself, with seemingly nothing else to do but watch BBC Parliament.

Mr. Chope proclaimed that it was time to "liberalise and deregulate the employment market", to allow workers to negotiate wages themselves, without restriction and interference, as free and consenting adults. At a time of crisis, Labour's assurance that the Minimum Wage is fair for workers is in fact proved false. Far from any definition of fairness, it is now resulting in millions of people across the country being made redundant.

Instead of being able to reduce wages below the state-regulated minimum in order to adjust to falling profits, businesses are now forced to make those employees redundant. Instead of being able to offer to work for less in order to gain a job in an increasingly hostile labour market, hopeful job applicants are being blocked by government regulation alone from achieving an income other than the dole.

Some are driven to extremes: according to Mr Chope MP, up to a million workers are already earning below the minimum wage - this significant proportion of the workforce is being criminalised unnecessarily for exercising their fundamental right to work.

More urgently than ever before, the minimum wage must be abolished, at least temporarily. As well as penalising employment through Employers' National Insurance Contributions and various PAYE schemes, the government has placed barriers to people keeping their jobs when they most depend on them, and has restricted the capability of businesses to hold onto those workers. These restrictions mar the label of fairness - they must be removed or reduced immediately if we are to stem the rise of unemployment, now rapidly approaching 2 million.

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