

## [The horrors of zero hour contracts](#) [1]

Written by [Tim Worstall](#) [2] | Saturday 10 August 2013

You'll have noticed the calls for the banning of zero hours contracts. What we used to call temping in fact. My problem with this call for the banning of said contracts can be summed up with this comment from [Natalie Bennett](#) [3] (Leader of the Green Party).

Imagine you get a phone call at 6am each morning, to tell you if you'll get any work ? or pay ? each day. You're awake, dressed, waiting, then it's ?stand down?. That can happen five days in a row, and you'll get to the end of the week without a penny coming in to your pocket.

No, I don't think I would like to get up at 6 am every day. However, let's just change this a tiny bit:

Imagine you get a phone call at 11am each morning, to tell you if you'll get any work ? or pay ? each day. You're awake, dressed, waiting, then it's ?stand down?. That can happen five days in a row, and you'll get to the end of the week without a penny coming in to your pocket.

There doesn't seem all that much difference there really. But that second type of work offer has people lining around the block, shouting, screaming even that they'd just love to be employed on such terms. For that's how the opinion and comment pages of the national newspapers are written.

You get up at whatever time, look around for the stories that an editor might be interested in. Then phone them up and pitch them in that small gap between their arriving at work (10 am) and the editorial meeting (11 am). Then you wait for your phone call at noonish which will tell you whether you have been chosen as one of the lucky ones to scribble something for the paper's readers. Note that the actual writing is the smallest part of the work routine: finding something to be written about is what takes the time and effort. Yet you'll only ever be paid if you do the easy part, the writing, and never for the research.

It's a job I've done and was happy to do too. As, obviously, everyone else who write freelance comment pieces is.

There are therefore two things that grate about this shouting that zero hours contracts must be abolished. The first being that it does seem odd that everyone else be denied the joys of the sort of contract that we metropolitan media luvvies think quite normal, desirable even. The second is that Natalie Bennett, the Leader of the Green Party, used to employ people in such a manner when she was an Assistant Editor at The Guardian. It just grates, that's all.

[blog comments powered by Disqus](#) [5]

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/regulation-industry/the-horrors-of-zero-hour-contracts>

### Links:

[1] <http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/regulation-industry/the-horrors-of-zero-hour-contracts>

[2] <http://www.adamsmith.org/taxonomy/term/5778>

[3] <http://liberalconspiracy.org/2013/08/08/zero-hours-contracts-should-be-banned/>

[4] [http://disqus.com/?ref\\_noscript](http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript)

[5] <http://disqus.com>