

[The \(il\)logic of Sunday trading laws](#) [1]

Written by [Pete Spence](#) [2] | Tuesday 24 July 2012



George Osborne's announcement that laws banning Sunday trading will be suspended for 8 weeks is a welcome one, and he is right to point out that this will be beneficial to business. It will be convenient for consumers and create jobs for the unemployed. But he should be making them permanent.

Many arguments to protect Sunday trading laws have rested on the notion that they protect worker's rights. Opponents of repeal have stated that employers will force existing labourers to work extra days. This assumes that the supply of jobs is fixed, and longer shifts must be filled by the same stock of employees. But there is no reason this should be the case - more shops being open for longer would mean more employment opportunities, particularly of benefit for students in full time education. This would allow them to gain experience and supplement their income. When youth unemployment figures are looking ever more depressing, now seems a better time than any to support a permanent suspension of the law.

A revolution in internet shopping (which is available 24 hours, every day) has put bricks-and-mortar shops on an increasingly uneven playing field. What the internet can not offer, is the sort of convenience that the local high street can. Claims that we already have enough time to shop will fall upon deaf ears amongst those who work unconventional hours and can find it hard to get shopping done around their jobs. Those with less flexible schedules, often the sort of things these laws are said to protect against, are the greatest victims in this case. Reform can mean that customers can tell businesses when they want to shop, not politicians.

If there is to be a loser from these changes, it will be small, independent stores. This may be the case, but that does not justify the government stepping in to protect them, when consumers would prefer to do business with larger stores, which often offer a better range of products at lower prices. What smaller stores can offer on a Sunday is a shopping experience. While other forms of entertainment are not prohibited under trading laws, shopping is, and this is to the detriment of those who enjoy shopping as an experience.

Many, including the Adam Smith Institute have been arguing to let shops open on Sundays for decades (one report is [nearly as old as I am](#) [3]). Politicians should not allow law to be dictated by scripture or by those who wish to put protecting the currently employed before the needs of those who have no jobs at all.

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