

Green Party: Government failure to get a grip on gig economy hurts everyone



14 February 2017

The Green Party has responded to news this morning that the gig-economy is thought to cost the Government £4billion in lost taxes. [1]

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“The news that insecure work is hurting public finances reinforces what we already knew – insecure work is bad for everyone.

“The gig-economy offers flexibility but in reality leaves workers without basic rights and vulnerable to exploitation. Add to this the lost tax revenue which could be supporting greater social security or the NHS, and it’s clear that the Government has been left standing by a rapidly changing world. It needs to get a grip on the gig-economy.”

The news comes just days after pressure from the Green Party saw the Government finally publish (on February 10) a report into employment status law which was completed more than a year ago. [2]

Bartley added:

“The extent of the Government’s apathy and inertia was revealed last week when it finally published the Coalition’s shelved review into employment status law, which warned back in 2015 that gig-economy workers were at risk.

“While Tory ministers shamefully sat on the findings of the report workers everywhere have been living with increasing insecurity. People need jobs they can build a life on, and they need them now.”

Notes:

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/feb/14/insecure-work-bad-uk-economy-tuc-zero-hours-contracts>
2. <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2017/02/10/green-pressure-sees-government-finally-publish-shelved-employment-status-law-review/>

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UK inflation falls in January compared to December. Core inflation holds steady.

The CPI index fell 0.5% in January compared to December. Food prices also fell 0.5% over the same time period, despite the bad weather effects on vegetables.

Core inflation over the last twelve months stayed at the same level as in December, at 1.6%.

Overall the CPI rose by 1.8% over the last twelve months. This was a higher annual rate than December owing to the fall out of a very good month a year ago. The main factor, accounting for half the annual increase came from higher oil prices affecting transport. The UK inflation rate is mirroring the German and US rates, affected by the same world oil price rise. The other most buoyant item was the increase over the last year in restaurant and hotel bills, reflecting higher wages.

January's figures were helped by falls in clothing and footwear prices, and by the intense supermarket competition which kept food prices down.

China issues plan to prevent chronic diseases

China's State Council has published a medium and long-term plan to prevent and treat chronic diseases in the next five to 10 years.

The plan, made public on Tuesday, aims to improve people's health, lower the onset risks of high-risk populations, and improve the patient quality of life.

The plan made lowering the premature mortality of major chronic diseases a core target, saying that by 2020 and 2025 the premature mortality rate of cardiovascular disease, as well as cancer and chronic respiratory diseases among the groups aged between 30 and 70 will drop by 10 percent and 20 percent, respectively, compared with 2015.

The plan put forward eight areas to be improved, including health education, standard diagnosis and treatment, health insurance and aid policies.

China toughens restrictions on court order defaulters

China has extended penalty restrictions against people who default on their court orders, keeping them from traveling by plane, applying for loans and credit cards, or getting promoted.

"There has been 6.73 million defaulters on the Supreme People's Court's (SPC) blacklist," said Meng Xiang, chief of the SPC's enforcement bureau.

So far, 6.15 million people who defaulted have been restricted from purchasing plane tickets and 2.22 million barred from travelling by high-speed train, which are usually more expensive.

The SPC has cooperated with airlines and railway companies from December last year to bar those who default from purchasing tickets, based on ID card information and their passports, according to Meng.

Previously, the ban was only based on ID card numbers, and many bought tickets with their passports to circumvent the ban.

"In addition, the SPC signed memos with 44 units including the National Development and Reform Commission to share information of defaulters in order to extend penalty restrictions," Meng said.

Altogether 71,000 people who defaulted have been restricted from serving as corporate representatives and executives, according to SPC figures.

The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, a major commercial bank, has rejected more than 550,000 loan and credit card applications from people who have defaulted.

"The courts include government staff, members of local legislative and political advisory bodies, and Communist Party of China congress delegates on its blacklist, with some receiving punishment including expulsion and demotion," Meng said, without disclosing exact figures.

The deterrent is effective, and nearly 1 million defaulters have voluntarily fulfilled their court orders.

It is now clear that the Government is unwilling to commit the necessary resources to our nation's defences – Griffith

Nia Griffith MP, Labour's Shadow Defence Secretary, responding to the International Institute for Strategic Studies' Military Balance report, said:

"This report exposes the Government's complete and shocking failure to maintain its commitment on defence spending to our Armed Forces and to the country.

"Just weeks after the Prime Minister was lecturing our allies about increasing spending to meet the 2 percent NATO commitment, it is now clear that her Government is unwilling to commit the necessary resources to our nation's defences.

"As the Defence Select Committee has shown, the MoD was already barely scrapping over the 2 percent mark and had changed its accounting methods to give the illusion of keeping the commitment. To be spending less than 2 percent of GDP on defence is utterly unacceptable, particularly in this time of immense global uncertainty.

"Labour is committed to spending at least 2 percent of our GDP on defence spending, as we consistently did when in government."

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