

Andrew Brady: Since the global recession of 2008, until 2014, in the UK only one in 40 net jobs added to the economy have come in the form of a full-time contract. Now, this is illustrative of the growing trend of a more precarious and insecure forms of work in today's globalised economy.

2.7 million people are on short-term or zero hours contracts. 1.4 million of that 2.7 do have some forms of hours guaranteed at the outset of the week, but, worryingly, 1.3 million people are on zero hours contracts. Now, this is a growing trend within the economy in conjunction with only one in 40 net jobs being full-time at the 2008-14 period, and this has a number of problematic issues that are worrying for the UK economy.

In particular, women and young people are disproportionately impacted because of precarious forms of work. The age group 16-24 year old represent around 11% of the UK labour market yet they constitute 36% of zero hours contracts.

Now, many people in the business community and economic institutes of universities would have you believe that greater flexibility leads to greater dynamism and efficiency within sectors, but that is not the case in many sectors of the economy.

The forms of zero hours contracts that I've just referred to are in the hotel and restaurant sector whereby that constitutes the greatest sector of zero hours contracts. This leads to high turnover, it has an impact on service quality, and, of course, it doesn't lead to a more productive workforce because there is often a lack of investment because people are being hired on the lowest possible terms.

There is also a depressing effect, quite literally, on people on more precarious forms of work and contracts, because at the outset of a week if you do not know how you are going to be able to pay your bills at the end of the month, because you have no guaranteed income, then there is a growing body of evidence that is showing that this is leading to anxiety and worrying, and depressing effects on people who do not know how to make ends meet because of this more precarious working environment.

One of the principle reasons why flexible labour markets are being driven forward is not because it leads to greater competition and productivity, it is often motivated by evading employment law and to ensure that people are being hired on the lowest possible terms.

People in the business community, such as the Institute of Directors, would propagate a case whereby they would say that people on precarious forms of work are just as happy as people on full-time contracts. Now, that is a misleading case to put forward because people are not being presented with the opportunity of full-time

employment, as I have already stated, so it becomes a choice of no work or the possibility of some hours throughout a week on a basis of zero hours.

Now, people faced with that choice of course are going to say that they are happy with those hours that they are being given, but the overall picture is that people would prefer full-time contracts, which are becoming increasingly scarce in the UK labour market, with negative consequences for turnover, for skills and investment, and are driving, of course, to the bottom, but also the psychological problems that are now becoming associated with this shift in the labour market.