

Job-Share for MPs

Submission to Labour's Policy Consultation 2018 on Work, Pensions and Equality: Addressing in-work poverty and working-age inequalities

"How do we tackle discrimination at work against women, young, older, BAME, disabled and LGBT people?"

1. We welcome any attempt by the Labour Party to make the work place more accessible for sections of society that have barriers to inclusion and equality.
2. We want our parliament to be more representative of all those it legislates for and represents. Issues faced predominantly by under-represented groups are often ignored by Parliament and the media. A more representative Parliament has the potential to radically change the discourse, improving society as a whole.
3. We would like to see the Labour Party leading the way in removing barriers for people from under-represented groups becoming MPs. We believe that politics is open mostly to those who don't carry the burden of childcare; whose financial and physical status enables them to commit time, money and other resources into campaigning, and who are able to be away from home, family and dependants.
4. We believe that by committing the Labour Party to campaigning for, and delivering a change in the law, that allows job-sharing for MPs, we will be leading the way in allowing a diversity of people who without this will be much less likely or even unable to stand for election - to become MPs, and help shape our country in a much more fair and democratically representative way.

Background

Previous attempts at changing the law include a private members bill, introduced by John McDonnell MP (*Members' Job Share Bill 2012-2013*) The bill was backed by Jeremy Corbyn MP as well as MPs from the 3 main English Political parties. This received its first reading on the 20th November 2012, but ran out of parliamentary time.

In 2015 two members of the Green Party, Clare Phipps and Sarah Cope, applied for and were refused their nomination for joint candidates as MPs on a job-sharing basis (*Cope and Phipps vs Basingstoke and Deane Acting Returning Officer, 28th July 2015*). According to human rights lawyer Rosa Curling, writing in the Fawcett Society report *Open House? Reflections on the Possibility and Practice of MPs Job-sharing*: "The implication in [the] judgement is that it is for *Parliament* to resolve these matters. But, to date, it has failed to properly grapple with these issues. If it continues to do, it is likely a further legal claim will become necessary and people like Sarah & Clare will want to ask the courts to consider intervening again".

The report's authors recognise the arguments for and against job-sharing, but also recognise the impact that job-sharing will have on making Parliament much more representative of the demographic of the United Kingdom. As Rosa Curling says "There can be no legitimate reason for preventing MP job-shares. There is nothing intrinsically problematic about undertaking the responsibilities of an MP, principally debating, making and reviewing legislation and government policy in Parliament, and acting as an advocate for constituents, on a job share basis. There may be practical issues to be addressed, such as the means by which joint MPs exercise their single vote in Parliament. However, these issues are eminently resolvable and indeed, there are very good reasons why MPs *should* be permitted to job-share."

Job shares are increasingly part of the world of work. There is no reason why they cannot be introduced into the world of politics. The Labour Party has made huge strides in changing the face of Parliament; it should be proud to take up the mantle of MPs job-share to permit an ever more diverse group of individuals to enter into our Parliament.

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