



WORKERS RIGHTS & EMPLOYMENT

Perspective and Principles

WR100 As Greens we take a holistic view of work and of rights. Our workplace is part of the environment. This is the basis of the Green Party's policies for workers' rights.

WR101 We define work in the full sense, not the traditional limited definition as employment in the formal economy. Green thinking recognises the latter as one part of the whole - a large part, but not the only one. Work exists in a variety of forms, each related to and often affecting others, like species in an ecosystem. Work covers all the activities people undertake to support themselves, their families and communities. (see [EC400-3](#))

WR102 Greens reject the traditional focus of some solely on individual rights, and that of others on collective rights. The broader Green perspective recognises that everyone needs both individual and collective rights, and a balance between them.

WR103 As well as offering legal protection, rights can empower. It is important that everyone is able to assert and defend their individual rights and can act collectively with others to assert and defend their common rights and those of their communities.

WR104 The Green Party's policies offer this Green perspective to each individual worker, and to working people organised collectively. We know that most collective organisation

is in trade unions, and value that. We welcome the increasing organisation of working people in their own co-operative undertakings. Both are ways of asserting workers' rights together, and through participation empowering individual workers.

WR105 This empowering of people is a key element in the development of a Green society and economy. The Green Party is committed to workplace democracy, whereby undertakings shall be managed co-operatively through the involvement of those who work in them and the communities they serve.

Individual Rights

Principles

WR200 Enshrining rights in law gives people a means of protection from injustice. Workers' rights offer protection against exploitation under our existing economic system. Our long term aim is to end the oppressive and exploitative nature of economic relations and develop a society of equality and economic justice. In such a society, rights would still need to be guaranteed in law, but there would be much less recourse to the law in order to protect those rights.

WR201 Individual workers need appropriate protection under the law. This means: i) a set of basic rights for all employees; ii) a package of measures to support the self employed and small

businesses; iii) a charter for volunteers and carers.

WR202 We recognise that the law must not be used as a way of dealing with the symptoms, whilst the source of the problem remains untouched. Laws designed to protect the oppressed, must also empower. Laws which penalise the oppressor, must also foster a sense of responsibility.

WR203 Workplace democracy will help us to attain these long-term aims. However, it must go hand in hand with other reforms that deal with discrimination, the power of the state, the ownership of land and the control of information. All these influence our ability to control our working lives, which in turn affects an individuals ability to care for the planet.

WR204 We recognise that there is a thin dividing line between "workers employed by a single regular employer" and the "genuinely self employed, freelance and sole traders who work for no particular organisation". We also recognise that the distinction will become more blurred as we move towards a society based upon the idea of partnership, where people work with others, rather than for them. While dealing with these separate categories in a way that is appropriate to their needs in our current economic system, we also aim to assist the development of a Green economy.

WR205 The development of an ecologically sustainable economy will mean the promotion and development of some sectors and

industries rather than others. This 'greening' of the economy must be done in such a way as to respect the rights of individual workers in all sectors - with significant investment in retraining and industrial diversification.

WR206 The development of an ecologically sustainable economy must also be socially and economically just. This must entail proper respect for workers' rights and economic security for all members of society. To this end, the Green Party recognises that all workers have the right to dignity at work, just conditions of work, a fair wage and security of employment.

WR207 For rights to be upheld and defended, access to relevant information and means of enforcement must be ensured. Every worker must have the right, from the outset of their employment, to effective remedies to enforce their rights, including adequate rights for workers' representatives to inspect and obtain information.

Policies

The Law of Contract

WR300 All employees, other than where specifically stated, should be covered by these rights.

WR301 We will replace the existing legal assumptions about the nature of contracts with a more sophisticated system which compensates for, rather than perpetuates, the inequalities of power within our society. This will take two forms: i) a statutory Code, laying down minimum terms between an employer and an employee; and ii) revisions to the law of contract designed to protect the small business and to promote the rights of the self employed. Although these rights could not be negotiated away, we

hope they would be built upon by agreements between workers and their employees; or between a small business and a larger one.

WR302 The new Labour Courts will have responsibility for interpreting the legal definition of what constitutes an employee.

WR303 Registers of genuinely self-employed workers will be set up in appropriate industries e.g. construction. Businesses using non registered labour will be automatically deemed to be employers.

WR304 Agencies set up "for the purposes of finding employment for workers, or supplying employers with workers", will be covered by the sections on leave entitlements, discrimination, health and safety.

WR305 The rules and regulations of the employing organisation will only be seen as part of the contract of employment if they are reasonable, consistent and well known.

WR306 If an individual worker so desires, then collective agreements made between the recognised trade union and an employer, will be treated as part of the contract of employment and shall be enforceable by law. Such a desire must be made free from duress, and can be subject to action in the Labour Courts by any of the parties concerned.

WR307 Employees will be entitled to a written contract on acceptance of the job being offered, or within an agreed probationary period. All changes to the contract must be notified to the employee directly. The contract must specify what is seen as an acceptable period of notice for such changes.

Discrimination

WR320 The Green Party believes that every worker has the right not to be discriminated against and to be treated with equality in equivalent circumstances.

WR321 The Green Party will support and improve legislation to make it an offence to harass or discriminate directly or indirectly against people at work, on grounds of race, sex, family status or responsibilities, disability, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, political opinion or physical appearance. This will include people who are disadvantaged by reason of resistance to discrimination.

WR322 The new Labour Courts will produce Codes of practice covering indirect discrimination and it shall be an offence to be found repeatedly flouting such codes. They will also produce guidelines about what constitutes a genuine "occupational requirement".

WR323 Every person should have an opportunity to challenge an employer who has "wrongly & unfairly refused to employ them", or failed to provide equal access to training & promotion. They will be assisted by the local team of inspectors in doing this, although the CRE (Commission for Racial Equality), the DRC (Disability Rights Commission) and the EOC (Equal Opportunities Commission) will have a supportive role. The Industrial Tribunal will have the power to enforce a recommendation for appropriate action in the following ways:

- an increase in salary, and/or promotion.
- compensation (e.g. if self employed).
- (re)instatement
- Employment & Redundancy

WR330 Workers should be protected from the first day of employment and there should be no minimum qualifying hours per week. An exception covering only the "right to a job" and "compensation for redundancy" may be made in some cases. This exception shall require the agreement of both employer and employee. It will last for a trial period of 3 months, renewable for one 3 month period by agreement of both parties.

WR331 Employers should have to consult with workers and justify any redundancies, by proving that such job losses were unavoidable and/or in the public interest. Selection would be subject to guidelines in a Code issued by the Labour Courts.

WR332 Casual work and short term contracts shall not be used as a way of avoiding statutory rights. An employee may challenge the employer to show that such contracts can be justified (e.g. temporary reductions in the workforce, or exceptional increase in activity, the limited nature of the workload or task). Short term contracts may only be offered for short term work.

WR333 We shall offer more protection to people who are dismissed because circumstances beyond their control "frustrate" them from carrying out the terms of their contract at that particular time.

Time and Leave

Objectives

WR340 The Green Party believes that excessive working hours contribute to ill health, stress, lower productivity, lower quality of life and a reduction in quality childcare. We believe that, on average, UK employees currently work too many hours in a

working week and a Green government will work towards a reduction in working time in the UK. One of our main aims will be to encourage the growth of part-time work, job-sharing and career breaks.

WR341 Whilst we acknowledge that the wider community has a significant role to play in the provision of childcare, we accept the need to support the large number of parents who are torn by the artificial separation of the "workplace" and the "home". Our long term aim must be to resolve this conflict, but in the short-term we have to give people greater flexibility in making decisions about these important aspects of their lives.

Policies

WR342 There should be a legal right to at least 28 days (or 196 hours) paid holiday in a calendar year, in addition to public holidays, for those employed at least 35 hours per week. This should apply pro-rata for those employed less hours per week or for shorter periods; it won't apply to people working fixed term contracts of less than 60 days.

WR343 The Green Party notes that under the Working Time Regulations 1998 workers can agree to work for longer than the proscribed 48-hour weekly limit. An agreement must be in writing and signed by the worker. This is generally referred to as an opt-out. As a high priority a Green government will remove the ability for employers to use such an opt-out. The mechanism for enacting this will be for the UK to implement the European Working Time Directive (93/104/EC) in full.

WR344 We are committed in the medium-term to a reduction in working hours to an average of 35

hours per week. The Green Party will enact legislation in order to bring about this change.

WR345 The Party will review the progress and implications of the legislation introduced in France for a 35-hour week (the so-called Aubrey law) in order to formulate the most effective legislation for the UK.

WR346 We will act to protect the earnings of the hourly paid under the legislation for a 35-hour week. The integration of this reduction in working hours with the proposed Citizens Income will be reviewed.

WR347 When calculating the average working week there are different reference time periods that may be used. A reference time period may be over a week, a month, a quarter or a year. The Party remains agnostic over the exact choice of reference period for calculating working hours. However, it notes that a reference period of a year will provide the flexibility often required by smaller, seasonally-based businesses.

WR348 There will be tax incentives for employers who provide support facilities at the workplace such as childcare, job-sharing, flexible working, counselling and family planning

WR349 Mothers will have the right to take breaks during the working day, without loss of pay, to nurse their babies.

WR350 We will introduce the following system of parental leave. "Parent" is defined as a person who has legal care of, and responsibility for, the child. The right to parental leave may therefore apply to more than one person per child. The sexual orientation of a parent shall in no way determine or reflect upon

their ability and worth in caring for children.

i)The period of statutory maternity leave (on full pay) will be three months.

ii)Every employee should be eligible for parental leave after 3 months service.

iii)In addition, each parent should have the right to take a period of parental leave during the first three years of the child's life. The parents, or parent, may designate another person as a co-parent, who will be entitled to take parental leave to care for the child.

iv)Parental leave should be gradually extended to one year, with the parents, or parent and nominated co-parent, deciding how to share the time between them (a single parent will be entitled to the whole one year leave). This time can be shared sequentially or concurrently.

v)The percentage of pay given will vary according to the length of the leave taken, in the case of small firms the cost will be covered from taxation.

vi)Parental leave is taken without loss of job rights.

vii)The notice for parental leave and the right to return to work should be reduced to the minimum necessary for proper planning. In an emergency no notice need be given. Employees should have protection against dismissal for late notice of return to work, up to a month prior to the ending of their period of parental leave.

viii)People in the process of adopting children shall be given time off work for introductory sessions and will then be entitled to parental leave as stated above.

WR351 There will be statutory rights to time off for education,

public service and voluntary work. Firms will receive appropriate compensation depending on their size and the nature of the job being left vacant.

WR352 There will be tax incentives to encourage employers to provide facilities at the workplace for people pursuing further education, or a service which is of benefit to the community.

WR353 We will examine the granting of a statutory right for time off to people caring for sick relatives/partners, children with special needs, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

Income and Economic Security

Principles and Policies

WR360 The large income disparities which characterise our society are a sign of significant social and economic injustice. The Green Party believes that working people should be paid a decent, living wage and, like every other citizen, be entitled to a sufficient level of economic security to meet their needs. Every worker, like every citizen, should have the right to fair income security, whether working, unemployed, in retirement or in sickness. Everyone should be paid the same for work of equal value, regardless of age.

WR361 To these ends we propose (i) a Citizens Income payable to every citizen as a basic right, funded by an ecological and genuinely progressive taxation system, and (ii) a significant role for unions and workers to ensure decent wage levels. In the absence of a fully developed Citizens Income scheme, we

support (a) the idea of minimum wage legislation, set at a level to combat social and economic injustice and the poverty and economic insecurity associated with low pay, and (b) the payment of decent benefits to low-and un-waged people.

WR362 The development of a genuinely sustainable economy will bring significant changes to many sectors, affecting patterns of employment, and offering new opportunities for 'green collar' jobs. Any disputes or problems arising from these economic changes will be handled by a newly created Job Evaluation Agency, in consultation with unions and employers.

WR363 A new Equal Pay Act will be drawn up and cases will be assessed by the District Committee (see [WR511](#) and [WR514](#)) advised by an expert evaluator, from the Job Evaluation Agency. Awards shall be back-dated with interest.

WR364 The Labour Courts will produce guidelines covering occupations where length of service and experience are considered legitimate considerations.

WR365 Benefits will be paid equally to all people over 16 years of age, with additional payments to pensioners and people with disabilities or special needs. (See also [WR351](#) and [EC732](#))

WR366 Someone wishing to leave their current employment shall not be disqualified from claiming unemployment or other social benefits.

Self-Employed Traders and Workers

Background and Principles

WR370 Many people are attracted by the autonomy and personal flexibility which self employment can bring. It is this independence which we wish to foster by introducing the Citizens' Income scheme ([EC730](#)). However, many of these advantages depend upon your occupation and large numbers of the self employed are more exploited, and have less freedom, than their waged counterparts. It is therefore necessary to provide an appropriate protection for people who work in certain trades.

Policies

WR371 The following Acts will be adapted to include protection for the self employed:

- i)The new equal pay act and legislation on discrimination will apply to contracts between businesses;
- ii)The government will provide funds to enable the self employed to claim the rights to maternity and parental leave, based upon both their average income and hours worked;
- iii)Contracts should include clauses outlining compensation to be paid by the employing organisation where the agreed contract is revoked by them, prior to the work taking place;
- iv)Legal enforcement of the payment for contracts will be dealt with by the Labour Courts. There will be penalties for large organisations failing to pay promptly to smaller businesses.

The self employed will have access to the inspectorate to enforce such claims;

v)Unemployment pay will be available to the self employed on equal terms to paid employees.

WR372 Discrimination against early leavers in occupational pension schemes will be outlawed.

Trade Unions

Background and Objectives

WR400 The Green Party supports the right of working people to form and join free democratic and self-governing trade unions, without restriction by employer or government. Greens share the unions' belief in working together to give individuals more say in their own lives. Unions should be participatory democracies, encouraging active involvement of all the workers they represent.

WR401 Greens recognise the achievements of trade unions in protecting and improving their members' terms and conditions of employment. We note that such benefits have accrued not only to union members but also to their fellow workers. Health and safety at work is a particular example. Unions have also acted to improve the social welfare of the wider community, and have a wider political role.

WR402 The forms of trade unions and industrial relations are related to those of employment and the economy. We recognise that in the short term in the United Kingdom most employees will continue to be subjected to traditional forms of employment in large-scale industrialised undertakings. Many of these workers are represented by unions

in traditional bargaining structures.

WR403 However, we also recognise that many workers who are most vulnerable to exploitation, both within workplaces and outside them, do not have trade union representation. We believe that selective action to secure improved pay and conditions for such workers is necessary, and we support the extension of union membership to them.

WR404 Greens are determined that the United Kingdom shall move to a Green society and economy. The fundamental changes that process brings will be reflected in changing forms and roles for trade unions. Unions already play a part in wider issues affecting their members. The Green Party is committed to support and encourage this process of change in unions. In particular, we envisage a major role for unions in promoting workplace democracy. We also believe that reformed trades councils could have a valuable role in their local communities.

WR405 We have much in common with trade union members, and wish to work with unions. Green policies offer much to working people, in the short as well as the longer term. We invite unions to work with us to achieve them.

Trade Union Membership, Representation and Recognition

Policies and Principles

WR410 We support the right to join a trade union, and condemn discrimination by employers

against union members. We shall enact a statutory right to join a union, which shall apply to all workers of any occupation or profession; this will include members of the police, security and armed services. We support unions taking the unwaged and unemployed into membership. Discrimination against union members, and in particular refusal of employment or dismissal on grounds of union membership, shall be illegal.

WR411 Every worker shall have the legal right to be represented by an independent trade union in dealings with their employer. This should include the right to be represented in collective bargaining and to participate in decisions at work. Individual contracts signed between an employer and worker will not be able to waive the right of that worker to be represented by their trade union.

WR412 All employers, regardless of the number of workers they employ, will be legally obliged to recognise unions chosen by their workforce. Additional support will be given to small businesses to ensure this happens effectively. We shall provide a legally binding system of workplace ballots for union recognition on behalf of workers collectively. These will be held at the request of workers. Employers shall be required to recognise trade unions successful in such ballots, and to provide them with adequate facilities to represent their members in the workplace. The choice of a union or unions to represent them shall be the collective prerogative of the workers in a workplace. We would support workers choosing a single union for their workplace, but it shall be illegal for employers to enter into single union recognition agreements which seek to pre-empt the

workers' choice. We encourage cooperation between members of different unions and welcome the formation of inter-union combinations at local, regional, and national levels.

WR413 We oppose and seek the abolition of those conditions and loopholes which unfairly restrict statutory union recognition. Current provisions which work to the detriment of workers include the conditions whereby (a) an employer is under no legal obligation to recognise a union if less than 40% of eligible workers vote in favour, (b) employers can recognise non-independent trade unions, thereby precluding the recognition of genuinely independent unions, and (c) employers can disregard demands for union recognition by bargaining units if those units are deemed not 'compatible with effective management'.

WR414 The collective and representative nature of trade unions requires that full membership and participation of the workforce should be encouraged; this should include managers. Unions should seek to recruit all eligible workers, including those traditionally under-represented in unions, women, part-time workers, volunteer workers, the low-paid and the unemployed. We welcome the steps already taken by some unions, and encourage others to do likewise. The cost of union membership subscriptions should not be allowed to be a deterrent; we shall develop a mechanism to ensure that the poorest paid workers can afford to join the union of their choice, and shall also provide tax allowances for their cost, as is done for subscriptions to professional bodies. However, we recognise that some workers will wish not to join a union, on grounds of

principle. We are opposed to the closed shop, whereby union membership is a condition of employment.

Trade Union Democracy and Autonomy

Principles

WR420 The Green Party believes in the self-organisation of workers in trade unions. Every union should have the legal right to autonomously determine its rules of organisation and activity, free from employer or state interference, but subject to standards of internal and participatory democracy. Union organisation should emphasise the branch of members in a workplace. Responsibilities should rest and resources be controlled at the most local level appropriate.

WR421 A trade union should be a participatory democracy. Wherever possible decisions should be taken by union members voting in their workplaces after discussion there. We do not favour decisions being taken by a remote national executive for members, nor postal ballots issued in isolation by a national headquarters. We support the use of open ballots at workplace meetings to take most decisions, but with secret ballots available if desired, for example to elect representatives. Discussion and decision at local meetings are the basis of union democracy; they encourage members to empower themselves by active participation.

WR422 As Greens we support union members seeking to organise their unions on these lines. We shall enact the right of

trade unions to the facilities needed for participatory democracy in the workplace. We do not believe participatory democracy in trade unions is best achieved by imposing particular forms of union organisations and balloting, but we accept that minimum standards of democratic procedure should be required by law. We believe that union members have to be convinced of the need for participatory democracy and that when they are, unions will have to respond to their aspirations. Our role is to encourage this.

WR423 A key factor in encouraging participation in trade unions is education. We shall encourage the provision of trade union education, in unions and the community. Such education must be adequately funded and more widely available. Union members must be able to attend it without obstruction by employers. Particular aims of such education must be to reach those traditionally under-represented in unions, and those under-represented as union representatives, including ethnic minorities.

Industrial Relations

Principles and Policies

WR430 The Green Party believes that good industrial relations depend on the achievement of consensus in the workplace, which recognises the interests of all those working in the undertaking. The best approach is through the introduction of workplace democracy, and that is our aim.

WR431 Meanwhile, we believe that it should be possible to reach a consensus by discussion and

negotiations between the opposing parties. Where a consensus cannot be reached, we favour the use of conciliation and arbitration to resolve the dispute. In the public sector, we shall negotiate agreements with trade unions which will allow either party in a dispute access to arbitration; we shall encourage undertakings in the private sector to do likewise. We shall extend the work and facilities of the Arbitration, Conciliation and Advisory Service of the Department of Employment.

WR432 The Green Party recognises the right to take industrial action without being in breach of contract and without the threat of dismissal or discrimination, in accordance with ILO Convention 87 and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. We will ensure this right is protected in UK legislation.

WR433 The Green Party recognises the economic and social costs of industrial action - and seeks increased resolution of industrial disputes through improved even-handed arbitration mechanisms. Where industrial action could create high levels of risk to vulnerable members of society, mechanisms would be developed for voluntary restrictions on industrial action, which guaranteed alternative means of obtaining fair resolution of claims and grievances. These mechanisms would not surrender the legal right to strike but would aim to reduce the need for trade unions to exercise that right.

Industrial Disputes

Principles and Policies

WR440 The Green Party believes that industrial disputes are most fairly and quickly resolved when

the role of the law is simply to put the parties on equal footing, not to allow one party legal devices to handicap the other. Because the economic relationship between the employer and the employee places power in the hands of the employer, we believe that certain individual and collective rights of workers and their trade unions in disputes must be protected by statute.

WR441 We shall provide a legal framework which will enable employees and their trade unions to pursue legitimate trade disputes, and provide them with appropriate rights and immunities in so doing. This framework will recognise that the legitimate interest of workers includes any alternative provision of the jobs, goods and services which are the basis of their work, and the environmental and social consequences of their work. Thus the framework will provide limited scope for 'secondary' industrial action.

WR442 Workers engaged in industrial action shall retain their right to employment, and shall be protected from unfair dismissal on account of that action. They shall have the rights to strike and to picket peacefully; the latter will include rights to use the public highway for picketing and to speak with anyone crossing the picket line. A code of practice shall cover the use of these rights; it will emphasise non-violent picketing and non-provocative policing of pickets. Dismissal of a worker for refusing to cross a picket line shall be unfair. Lockouts shall be illegal. Trade unions shall not be allowed to sign away their legal rights, nor those of their members; 'no strike' and similar agreements shall not be legally binding.

WR443 Payments to workers under the Green Party's proposed

Citizens' Income scheme will not depend upon their being in work, and thus will be made to strikers. Prior to the introduction of that scheme, we believe that workers on strike and their families should receive full Social Security benefits.

The role of unions

Objectives and Policies

WR450 The Green Party looks forward to a wider and changing role for trade unions as the United Kingdom moves to a Green society and economy. We believe that union members should be consulted through their unions on proposals for their industries and legislation affecting them.

WR451 We encourage the involvement of trade unions in workplace democracy. Unions should have the right to be consulted on the management of their members' workplaces, and to form combines of representatives of different unions there to respond to such consultation. Existing union initiatives such as specialist advice to members setting up co-operative undertakings, and the preparation of alternative plans for socially useful production, should be developed. These initiatives should involve the local community as well as members in the workplace.

WR452 We encourage trade unions to develop schemes of mutual aid, such as the NALGO (now UNISON) welfare fund. We shall provide tax incentives for this.

WR453 We welcome the involvement of trade unions in wider campaigns affecting their members in the community, particularly in relation to the environment and social/economic

justice. Fine examples of unions taking action on environmental issues include the opposition to the dumping of nuclear waste at sea by the National Union of Seamen (now RMT) and the introduction of 'environmental' shop stewards by NALGO (now UNISON).

International

Principles

WR460 The Green Party supports the right of workers in every country to form and join free democratic and self-governing trade unions, without restriction by employer or state authority. We support the work of international organisations, notably the International Labour Organisation, to that end. We condemn all attempts to deprive working people of those rights.

Health and Safety at Work

WR470 Every worker has the right to a safe and healthy working environment. The Green Party would ensure that this right is protected in law.

Enforcement and the Labour Courts

Principles and Objectives

WR500 We shall ensure that all workers are covered by an ongoing system of liaison between representatives of the employees and employers. This will involve building upon the existing system of industrial tribunals; the health and safety legislation; ACASS and the best practice of collective bargaining.

WR501 Implementation of the new legislation will be in the hands of people directly effected by those decisions. By creating a separate system of industrial tribunals and labour courts, we will take employment law out of the hands of the existing judiciary.

WR502 Our approach will be based upon the principles of self regulation, flexibility, conciliation and arbitration.

Policies

WR510 Legal aid will be provided for cases brought before the Labour Courts.

WR511 The primary responsibility for supervising the legislation will be in the hands of workplace committees (in large establishments), or local committees covering a particular industrial sector. These will have a similar role to that of the existing health and safety committees, but will deal with the application of the legislation covering workers individual and collective rights. They will therefore have a structure and responsibilities, which are linked too, but separate from, those of the existing negotiating machinery. They will have responsibility for:

- i) advising the local negotiators (where they exist) on the various acts and suggesting ways in which existing, or new, agreements can be improved;
- ii) helping to resolve disputes prior to them going to a Industrial Tribunal, by hearing the grievances of any employee(s), who feel that either the spirit, or the letter, of the relevant acts are not being practised;
- iii) where no union representation exists, they should oversee the drawing up of contracts of

employment, the application of common industrial standards and any rules governing the practice of a particular workplace;

iv) advising the work of the inspectors appointed by the District Committee to enforce the acts. (see [WR363](#))

WR512 The District Committees will be composed of representatives from business, the unions and the local community. They will be funded and serviced by the local council. The Committee will have responsibility for:

i)Overseeing the work of the District's Industrial Tribunals;

ii)Appointing, and overseeing the work of, the local inspectorate;

iii)Education about both the content of the act and best practice;

iv)The enforcement (via the inspectorate and their guidance to the Industrial Tribunals) of workers collective and individual rights (outlined respectively in [WR400](#) - [WR453](#) and [WR300](#) - [WR353](#));

v)Helping to establish and maintain a full coverage of local workplace, or industrial, committees.

WR513 The District Committees will have the initial task of advising employers on such questions as what constitutes a genuine "occupational requirement" and what forms of ill health & disability make someone unsuited to a particular task.

WR514 The inspectorate will be made up of trained, full time staff who will be financed by the local council, but accountable to their District Committee. (see [WR363](#))

WR515 Any one of the District Industrial Tribunals will be

composed of three people: one from the trade union side; one from business and one from the community. They will be advised by the inspectorate and any decision which cannot be reached by consensus must be passed up to the Regional Industrial Court.

WR516 The Regional Industrial Court and the National Appeals Court will be staffed by "labour court" judges, who will have a professional training and ethos which is distinct from that of existing judiciary. However, the stress should be on self government in the workplace, with most problems being resolved through the active involvement of the main participants.

WR517 The Labour Courts should take heed of previous case law, but its main authority will be based upon a new series of acts covering:

i)Collective rights at work

ii)The Contract of Employment

iii)Employment and redundancy

iv)Discrimination

v)Time and Leave

vi)Income

vii)Health and Safety at Work

WR518 These tribunals and courts will have the power to make orders for remedial action, payment of wages and injunctions.

WR519 Apart from exceptional cases (e.g. strong evidence of violence at work) the workers should remain in employment pending a speedy hearing of their case. The employer should have to prove that a permitted reason for the dismissal actually existed; that the procedures leading to dismissal were fair and complied with any provision agreed with the unions; and that the dismissal

was fair according to good industrial practice.

WR520 Re-employment should be the normal remedy for unfair dismissal, rather than a lump sum pay-off.

Green employment -Transforming the Nature of Work

Workplace Democracy

Principles and Objectives

WR600 A Green economy must be a more mutual economy, in which industries and enterprises which are run by and for those who depend on them and are affected by them play a significant role in the economy. We believe that the international co-operative principles provide the benchmark for such businesses. This means that the Green Party must enable both the creation of new mutuals and the greater involvement of stakeholders other than investors in existing businesses.

WR601 We cannot impose a system of workplace democracy upon society; the role of the Green Party is to assist in the evolution of this new economy. We can do this as workers and employers, as councillors and MPs and as consumers, investors and neighbours.

WR602 Our main priority should therefore be to support those people who are struggling to create alternative economic systems and Green ways of running society. The Green Party will provide advice, coordination and materials which help this transformation. A Green

government would therefore promote legislation and action which freed working people to make the changes which they felt necessary.

WR603 The producers of services or products obviously play a key role within our economic system, but we recognise that other groups also have a stake in the process.

WR604 By giving workers the freedom to organise collectively, a Green government will enable trade unionists to prioritise demands for workers to have a greater say in what they produce and how they produce it. Sharing the responsibility for running a business will initially be achieved through a natural extension of collective bargaining, improved union facilities; training of workers representatives and access to company information.

Policies

WR610 We would broaden the existing legal framework away from its narrow focus on those people who "own" the majority of shares. We would promote the interests of the other shareholders and investors, with the ultimate aim of having capital provided by either those who work in the organisation, or by the immediate community on which it depends. The main stakeholders will become the workers, other businesses, shareholders, the local community and the environment.

WR611 We reject any scheme which uses the token participation of the workforce, as a way of increasing their exploitation.

WR612 Any scheme for workplace democracy introduced by either a Green employer, or under legislation laid down by a Green government, should be done in consultation with local

trade unionists. However, the new channels of decision making should encompass all staff, not just those within a trade union. The trade unions should be encouraged to maintain their role as upholders of workers' rights and as a separate channel by which grievances can be aired. They should also monitor the effectiveness of democracy within the workplace and have a major say in any proposals to improve the system adopted.

WR613 We encourage Greens within trade unions to promote those policies, ways of organising and priorities, which are consistent with this new vision of the stakeholder and a decentralised, sustainable economy.

WR614 We support the use of Green strikes, occupations and other forms of industrial action which are aimed at protecting the environment and the communities within it.

WR615 The introduction of our Citizens' Income scheme ([EC730](#)) will enable people to have more choice in selecting both the work that they do and their employer.

WR616 As part of the process of moving towards the involvement of all the stakeholders, a Green government would introduce schemes in certain organisations which give workers greater control over internal decisions concerning how something is to be produced, or a service provided. These schemes would allow for either equal representation of workers and managers (at all levels), or for the election of certain key managers by the workforce. An extension of these schemes to allow for worker representatives on a "Board of Direction" would also give workers the ability to influence decisions about what is to be

produced and what resources would be used. More general decisions about the allocation of resources within an organisation and its priorities, would be made by all the stakeholders concerned. These schemes could be triggered by the agreement of both management and the appropriate local trade union(s); or by a majority of 80% of staff voting for such a scheme to be introduced.

WR617 We value the skills of directors and managers, who act as the main coordinators and facilitators within an organisation. However, we do not believe that managers and directors should have to carry the sole burden for success or failure. We encourage and support all professionals and managers who seek to incorporate Green ideas within the ethos and practice of their occupational group.

WR618 The creation of a floor of individual rights at work; the ending of discrimination; and the introduction of the Citizens' Income scheme will help transform the contract of employment into more of a partnership than an exchange between an "employer" and "employee".

The Environment and the Workplace

Background and Objectives

WR620 The environment will gain from the decentralisation of industry and the growth of workplace democracy as larger numbers of people will have a more direct connection with the consequences of their actions.

WR621 Any moves towards workplace democracy must be put

within the context of a system of environmental regulation. Whilst the Green Party sees the need for well resourced and independent watch dogs, we do not feel that leaving it to the professionals can be a replacement for the long-term aim of giving people real responsibility through a system of self management.

Policies

WR630 A Green government will therefore create a new Health, Safety and the Environment Act, which will extend the role and powers of the existing system of Health and Safety representatives.

WR631 Trade Unions and their branches will have the right to establish workplace environmental representatives, who will have the same rights at work as other trade union representatives. This will include appropriate facilities and time off to undertake their duties. Such representatives should play a decision making role in the development of strategies and implementation plans for making workplaces, companies and other public, private and third sector organisations greener and more sustainable.

WR632 We encourage the creation and implementation of plans for the conversion of targeted military and other industries, into socially useful and environmentally friendly production. These conversion strategies are best produced at a local level with the involvement of the workers; the local community; consumer groups; Green businesses and financial institutions, and other interested parties (e.g. environmental experts). (see [PD312-3](#))

Co-operatives

Principles and Policies

WR633 We support the formation and growth of cooperatives as a way of encouraging a democratic and non- hierarchical approach to work. We also encourage co-operatives to have strong links with the community and the people they trade with, and to encourage and enable high levels of member participation.

WR634 We recognise that the bottom-up development of cooperatives is often more appropriate than the use of legislative devices, when seeking to establish a system of industrial democracy in those sectors of the economy dominated by small firms, sole traders or systems of (sub) contracting.

WR635 We would maintain a comprehensive network of co-operative development agencies working with the whole range of mutual businesses, including community businesses, services run by their users, LETS and other community finance initiatives and consumer co-ops as well as worker co-ops. We would also see them providing a stronger trading link between cooperatives, Green councils and other Green movement organisations.

WR636 We encourage cooperatives to develop federated structures rather than grow in such a way that it threatens their democratic ethos and links with the community.

WR637 A Green Government will prioritise the setting up of cooperatives in sectors of the economy from which they are traditionally excluded and which have low union membership.

WR638 We would encourage trade unions to explore the use of cooperative structures and systems of mutual aid.

WR639 The consumer cooperative is one of the best expressions of a process of consumer awakening and should be encouraged as a step towards real consumer power. We support such cooperatives because they are founded on the principles of mutual aid, and are one way of breaking the monopoly of retailing held by a small group of multinationals. We should ensure that workers within such organisations are given a significant say in the running of the company, particularly in how the work is done.

Investor/Shareholder Rights and Responsibilities

Policies

WR640 We encourage employees with shares in their company to combine with other small shareholders. This is one way of giving people a real say in the running of a company and thereby taking more responsibility for its future. We would legislate to increase the provision of company information to shareholders and improve the democratic channels of large businesses.

WR641 A Green government would pass legislation allowing for the democratisation of Pension funds, as one way of getting millions of people to take on direct responsibility for their actions. This should be done in consultation with the appropriate trade union(s) but the channels of decision making should

encompass all contributors to these funds.

WR642 Where there is specific need for urgent action and the redirection of a particular company towards more social useful and environmentally friendly goals; and there is a demand from the other stakeholders for control of the company; then the government may use legislation to buy a "golden share" in that company. This gives the stakeholders (to whom the government would relinquish power) majority control of the company, for the price of one share, it does not directly affect the price of the other shares or the dividends which are paid. However, we recognise that its use would be limited by the growth of multi-national companies and challenges made under international law.

WR643 The Green Party encourages the growth of Employee Share Ownership Plans. within the firm.

The Self-Employed

Policies and Objectives

WR650 By encouraging inter-trading, we hope to break with the system of contracting and sub-contracting which is built into many modern forms of production and makes many cooperatives and small, community based firms, dependent on a few big internationally based purchasers and suppliers.

WR651 Other businesses will benefit by a more ethical approach to trading, with the emphasis on mutual aid, trust and interdependence. Suppliers and buyers can also use their economic power as a means of

encouraging socially useful and environmentally friendly production.

WR652 The self regulation of communities and industries within a system of Labour Courts, will increase people's sense of participation in, and control over, their working lives.

WR653 In addition to the personal autonomy gained through the Citizens' Income scheme, we aim to provide the resources and the tools by which people can engage in voluntary activities outside the formal economy.

Volunteers and Carers

Volunteers

WR660 Many organisations rely on the work of volunteers, such as charities, campaigning and community groups, and political parties. The Green Party acknowledges the social value of volunteering and of the voluntary sector in general. Volunteers should be treated with respect and valued for their contribution.

WR661 Organisations should not replace paid employees with volunteers. The introduction of the Citizens Income will provide all citizens with a level of economic security. This will put more people in a position to make choices between paid work and volunteering or a combination of both - and is likely to lead to an increase in voluntary work. (see [EC732](#))

WR662 There is a need for accountability especially when dealing with members of the public. Those volunteers working face to face with the public need support and back-up from staff and managers. Provision needs to

be made to ensure volunteers have sufficient insurance cover. Volunteers should also be police checked when working with vulnerable people.

WR663 Appropriate preparation should be made for the arrival of a volunteer. They should be provided with the facilities they need to do their volunteering. Working conditions should not be less favourable for volunteers. They should receive an induction including information about the organisation they are working with and how their contribution fits within the organisation. They should not be asked to do only boring, routine work or work that is dangerous or illegal. Volunteers should be encouraged to complete relevant training and to take part in appropriate staff meetings where possible. They should not be expected to work longer hours than employees. They should be entitled to regular breaks, have comparable leave entitlements and receive appropriate training and travel expenses. References should be provided for volunteers.

Carers

WR664 Much social care is still done in this country by volunteers -partners, children, parents, friends & neighbours all contribute to helping those in need of care. The Green Party believes that volunteer carers should be recognised as doing valuable work & Citizen's Income will help those unable to do paid work as well as fulfilling caring obligations (see [SW900](#) & [EC732](#)).

WR665 The Green Party supports the current position of Invalid Care Allowance or Carer's Allowance but would substantially increase it.

The role of Local Authorities

Policies and Principles

WR670 Local authorities should use their power as suppliers, purchasers and contractors to promote these principles.

WR671 They should look at their own organisation and see how it could be changed to introduce an element of workplace democracy.

WR672 Local authorities can develop support networks for mutual aid and voluntary organisations; co-operatively run local businesses and those who are struggling to establish a system of workplace democracy within a conventional firm. These networks should include shared pools of finance, expertise and information.

WR673 The relevant authority could offer a low standard rate of return on borrowing, as an incentive to firms introducing more co-operative methods of working. We could also give these firms priority in the provision of business expertise, cheap accommodation and support for research and development projects.

International Action

Background

WR680 We recognise that many businesses (including denationalised ones) are now multinational concerns which makes it more difficult for the workers within one country to have influence over the actions of their employers.

Policies

WR681 We will encourage the formation of links between those communities and trade unions which are directly affected by a multinational company, or its subsidiaries. We also need intergovernmental action and legislation by the EU to introduce workplace democracy at this level.

Workers Rights & Employment chapter updates
Autumn 2008: new WR631 inserted

The following additional policy statements can be found in the Green Party Record of Policy Statements (RoPS) on [Workers Rights](#):

- [Support for Firefighters \(Autumn 2002\)](#)
- [Fire-fighters Dispute \(Spring 2003\)](#)
- [Green Party Relationship with Trade Unions \(Autumn 2003\)](#)
- [Cockle Pickers \(Spring 2004\)](#)
- [Support for Gate Gourmet Workers \(Autumn 2005\)](#)
- [Repeal of the Anti-Trade Union Laws \(Autumn 2006\)](#)
- [Maximum/Minimum Wage \(Autumn 2008\)](#)
- [Women in Employment and Business \(Spring 2009\)](#)