The North’s workers risk being hit hard by Brexit

‘This is all about risk’ wrote Martin Lewis, the Money Saving Expert wrote in his blog about the EU referendum. Martin examined a range of different issues from roaming charges, mortgage directives to the economy and misunderstandings about human rights. After carefully weighing up the evidence and risks, Martin Lewis has decided to vote to remain in the EU.

It is significant that Martin picked out stronger EU employment rights such as one of the positives about the European Union. Given the Conservative government’s recent record of attacking unions and reducing justice at work, workplace rights would be vulnerable. The fact that the leading lights in the Leave campaign are some of the most hostile to employment protection only increases the risks.

The EU employment rights provide a level playing field and make a practical difference. Maternity and paternity rights and family-friendly rights for when children fall ill would be less certain. Equal treatment for part-time and temporary workers could easily be cut affecting millions of workers in less secure employment. Health and safety protection would be open to being downgraded by the current government putting workers in some of the most dangerous workplaces at greater risk of harm. Existing equality rights for women will be up for debate.

The jobs risk to the North East from a Brexit is significant. We have over 150,000 North East jobs in different sectors linked to EU trade. 70,000 of these are in manufacturing and will likely be disadvantaged over time outside the EU. It’s not just firms such as Nissan and Hitachi that are giving warnings but our region’s home grown independent firms are worried too.

Many other employment sectors risk job losses if the UK leaves the EU. The public sector has already been hit badly by the decisions of the Conservative government to make them pay for the bankers’ crash in 2008. Already the Chancellor is arguing more public spending cuts would feature in an emergency budget if we left the EU. This is on top of the thousands of existing public sector jobs in jeopardy from ongoing flawed austerity policies. Given past Conservative ministerial decisions, the likelihood is the North East will face some of the steepest cuts of all to our public services.

Perhaps the biggest unknown is the impact on retail and hospitality jobs which will be affected by how people respond to the economic turmoil following a Brexit decision. The TUC believes average wages would likely be lower outside the European Union in the future as the economy changes shape. This doesn’t bode well for disposable incomes and consumer spending on our high streets.

Risk isn’t distributed evenly or fairly. The very wealthiest in society will still be rich if the UK leaves the European Union. Instead it will be ordinary working and middle class people who go to work, support their family and want to plan a future who will carry a lot of the risks. That is why the TUC is encouraging workers to avoid the risk and vote to remain in the EU on Thursday. You can find out more at [www.tuc.org.uk/euref](http://www.dontriskit.uk) and watch our video at [www.dontriskit.uk](http://www.dontriskit.uk)

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