

The Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill 2020

by Dr Alyaa Ebbiary (19th May 2020)

It is the duty of MPs and Lords to ensure that Parliament properly scrutinises The Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill 2020 that is currently before Parliament. Despite the significant distraction of coronavirus, scrutiny of the Bill is vital. **The Bill must address the UK's transition from the European Union while also creating an immigration system that is fit for the needs of modern Britain; in its current form it does not achieve this.**

The Bill proposes an end to free movement of EU nationals and will also pave the way for a points-based system to limit the numbers of “unskilled workers” and encourage high-earning workers into the country. **What counts as “skilled” and “non-skilled” work has been measured entirely through earnings and not through need – a rationale that has been rendered absurd by the need for low-paid carers, during the current coronavirus pandemic;** as well as shelf-stackers and fruit pickers, all of whom are commonly migrant workers.

According to the [Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants \(JCWI\)](#), the “Immigration Bill does not set out what the future UK system will look like. Instead, the Bill gives Ministers powers to modify primary or secondary legislation as appropriate in consequence of, or in connection with, the Bill and through delegated legislation– these powers are commonly known as ‘Henry VIII’ powers”. The JCWI is rightly concerned that the Hostile Environment policy remains unaddressed and will be extended to EU nationals as well as continue to effect non-EU nationals. In the hands of current and future governments, there is a risk that these powers will foreclose parliamentary scrutiny and result in worse labour shortages than already demonstrated in the current pandemic. **By reducing the ability of Parliament to properly scrutinise immigration reform, the Bill creates the imminent danger that there will be even fewer people to care for the elderly and vulnerable. In addition fruit and vegetables left to rot in the fields of British farms will become the norm.**

The Government’s Hostile Environment policy for migrants has resulted in the illegal detention, deportation and separation of families in the 8 years since it was introduced by the then Home Secretary Theresa May. The Hostile Environment had three aims: (1) to discourage people from coming to the UK; (2) to stop those who do come from overstaying; (3) to stop irregular migrants being able to access essential services. By any of these measures the policy has failed, it has caused needless suffering, while wasting Parliament and the Judiciary’s time on appeals. This failure has been demonstrated by: the Windrush scandal, medical treatment denied to British military veterans, and the 75% of appeals by applicants for refugee status that were lost by the Home Office in 2018. As white British citizens do not face the same demands to prove their residency, these deportations have disproportionately affected non-white Britons. The system has understandably been denounced as racist.

The Bill has promised to “restore trust in the immigration system”, however this Bill fails to do so, with no actual reform of the system. **We recommend that MPs and Lords do *not* vote for this Bill, but instead call for substantive reform of the system and an overhaul of the Hostile Environment. The Government must be restrained from further inhumane treatment of British citizens and residents; and restrained from extending the Hostile Environment policy to EU citizens in the UK. The Bill must be amended so that it is fit for modern Britain.**

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