zero h

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1. What do businesses think about the government's reforms to zero-hour contracts?

○ a.) They are pleased with them.

○ b.) They are indifferent.

○ c.) They are dismayed.

2. How much do the reforms cost businesses each year?

○ a.) 1 billion pounds

○ b.) 3 billion pounds

○ c.) 5 billion pounds

3. What is one of the main concerns of the hospitality industry regarding these reforms?

○ a.) They want more workers' rights.

○ b.) They cannot afford to hire young people.

○ c.) They are happy with the changes.

4. What does NEET stand for?

○ a.) Not in Education, Employment, or Training

○ b.) Not Engaged in Employment Training

○ c.) Not Employed, Education, or Training

5. What is a potential consequence of the government's policies mentioned in the discussion?

○ a.) Increased employment rates

○ b.) More NEETs

○ c.) Higher business profits

6. What is one argument made about flexible contracts?

○ a.) They only benefit employees.

○ b.) They can benefit both employers and employees.

○ c.) They are always bad for businesses.

7. What is the challenge mentioned regarding minimum wage increases?

○ a.) They are too low.

○ b.) They make it harder to employ young people.

○ c.) They are not increasing enough.

8. What is a concern about housing asylum seekers in local communities?

○ a.) It helps the economy.

○ b.) It can lead to civil unrest.

○ c.) It is always welcomed by locals.

9. What do local communities want regarding planning applications?

○ a.) To have no say in decisions.

○ b.) To be informed and involved.

○ c.) To have more asylum seekers.

10. What was Steve's opinion about the eclipse?

○ a.) It was boring.

○ b.) It was amazing.

○ c.) He didn't watch it.

Transcript

that's it the kind of constant challenge that you're facing here that you want workers' rights, that you want good pay and fair pay for people, but at the same time you want to incentivize and encourage businesses to grow, especially given the kind of stagnant nature of the economy. >> Businesses have reacted with dismay to the government's reforms to zero-hour contracts. They've been warned it costs 3 billion pounds a year. Let's talk to Steve Swinford, the political editor of The Times. Morning, Steve. >> Good morning. >> I'm fascinated by this, Steve, because um I've done any number of conversations with ministers and you'll have done even more where they will give you a big spiel about how close they are to business and how much they want to back business. And then you do a list of policies that are anti-business, which starts with the NI rise on employer contributions, but it will include things like uh business rates, it will include working regulations like this one. And it's a very difficult thing for the government to sustain that they're pro-business if the literal policies cost businesses more money. >> Yeah, and their argument always was that this will lead to economic growth in and of its own right, but their own costings showed that that is not the case, that there is a cost to this, a direct cost to business. Whatever way you cut the figures, however generously you do so, there is a cost to business. And look, you've had people on your show this morning, they are furious about it. Well, the hospitality industry in particular, they have been kind of crying blue murder about it for a long time, and they make a really simple point, which is a really powerful one, that look, if we can't take on young people because it's too expensive, then you're going to get more NEETs. And you are a government that wants to end NEETs, that wants to stop this kind of million-fold uh number of people that are not in education, employment, or training. And you're going to be fueling that with your own policies. So, obviously there is good in these policies, arguably that this is going to help people, but when you look at the compound effect of a lot of these measures, whether it's the employers' uh NICs stuff or these measures here on on in terms of zero-hours contracts, it is more burden and regulation on business, and that is making it harder to grow businesses and crucially harder to employ young people. >> And it's easy to have a moral position, isn't it, when you don't have to make the decision? But most things in life aren't 100% in one direction. There's trade-offs, and there's no obvious easy answer because in an in an in an ideal world, no one should be exploited by zero-hour contract because it can be appalling. They They can have their jobs taken away from them, as we saw with those ferries, in a in a second. But the flip side, if a business can't use casual labor at points of peak in a way

that doesn't compromise its bottom line, that business will no longer exist, and that's bad for them bad for society as well. >> Yeah, and and that's one of the issues that actually sometimes, you know, more flexible contracts can benefit both the employers and the employees. So, it it's one of those finely balanced issues, but exactly as you say, Stig, it is that bigger thing. I'll give you some insight into it. So, every year, I do a story, normally in the run-up to the budget, about what they're going to do on the minimum wage because what I supposed to do was that every year, they just accepted the recommendations from the independent body that did it, and it was just going up and up. And we'd get to the budget, and you'd get whoever the chance was of the day, whether it was, you know, Rishi Sunak back in the day, or Jeremy Hunt, or Rachel Reeves, and they would all say, "We are giving Britain a pay rise. We are We are increasing the minimum wage." And this has happened on consecutive years, year after year after year. And the point is, they are not giving Okay, technically, it's their decision, but that is a pay rise that was paid out the pockets of the businesses. And that's the challenge here, and we've got to the point now where there is a genuine political debate around whether, particularly for young people, some of those pay rises are making it more difficult to employ them because, yes, they get more money, but the businesses they are less affordable for them. So, that that is the kind of constant challenge that you're facing here, that you want workers' rights, that you want good pay and fair pay for people, but at the same time, you want to incentivize and encourage businesses to grow, especially given the kind of stagnant nature of the economy. And that is what businesses are complaining about today. >> And as we see a similar difficult I mean, this is probably just a um um a paradigm for every political discussion we have. Look at us the the issue of housing asylum seekers. You want to have a system that works quickly. We heard that from Jackie Smith. You want to have a system that is fair, but not burdensome to the taxpayer. You want to put people in a place that doesn't compromise their basic rights as human beings. And yet you probably don't want to put a thousand young men in a village in Yorkshire where it will translate the demographic ratio from six men to to one woman. And yet you know, if everyone is a NIMBY, you've got to put these people somewhere. No one is going to be satisfied. And that's that's where we've got to with this debate. >> That that was the problem with Andy Burnham's comments the other day. So he was right to say, and it is undeniably correct, that asylum seekers are being held in deprived areas. And that is happening in places like Blackpool. There was a minister yesterday who suggested that it led to borderline civil unrest. And that is right. There are huge issues in deprived communities because it is cheaper to get the economy there and there is a cap on the rent. So that

that is why you get a lot of asylum seekers in deprived communities. But by the same token, doesn't make it fair to then put a military base that is next to a tiny village with 600 people, you know, 1,200 male asylum seekers. And the inevitable pressure that that will have on local resources when they are free to come and go. So we we're talking about different degrees of fairness here. But look, you could argue that there should be more in that, let's say, leafy parts of Surrey. And that is a perfectly fine and fair argument to make. But there is a very different argument with these former uh military uh Ministry of Defence sites which are enormous. And we're talking about enormous numbers of people. And Rachel Maskell, the Labour MP, has very eloquently made the point about what she's facing with that extraordinary ratio of six men to one woman. The the the, you know, and local people deserve a say on it. There there was one we were looking at yesterday. And they're planning this big site in in huge site. You can't see the planning application for it. It's not published. It's gone straight to the Ministry of Housing. So the local community can't actually even properly see what they're up against. And see what they are doing. >> Well, that's why that that place we had the guy on from Piddington. He wanted to declare themselves an independent republic. Not necessarily because they were anti migrant. His argument was they just want to be involved. They just want to have a sense of what's going on in cuz if you live in a you know, we're all nimbys at heart. I think one of the central thing that that fuels human society, certainly British society, is we're all nimbys. We all believe in things and they might slightly change as they make our lives more inconvenient. But if you're going to have a village where you you spent money and you built a life and it's going to be fundamentally altered by a decision that you can't even access, that is going to cause people concern. >> That's going to cause people concern. It also runs counter to Andy Burnham's central kind of tenant which is local democracy. People should have a say in community should have a say in in decisions that affect their community. And look, I'm going to say something weird here, but the planning system is a fundamental tenant of our democracy. People hate it. They might hate various aspects of it. There are are issues with it, certainly. But the ability to know what is being done in your area and being built on you go on the council website, you go on the planning thing, you see the application for your neighbor's neighbor's property, what they're doing. That is a fundamental tenant tenant of of democracy. Now, different governments will give different weighting to decisions and and that's fine. But either way, people at least have the right to see what is going on and to if they don't like it, to object to it. Those objections may not be heard. They may be overridden. Secretary of States may say no, we are going ahead with this asylum camp on a former disused Ministry of Defence

base. These people have to go somewhere. But that is, you know, the right that people should have. >> It's very strange in these cases that we've not seen that. >> Before [snorts] you go, Steve, I'm going to ask you a question. You might want to answer this. Which is more overhyped, Cobra as an idea or the eclipse last night? >> I think the eclipse last night was absolutely amazing. I took my entire family out on Saturday. >> you? >> It was honestly like what okay, two two things were amazing about it. You get this extraordinary alignment of two celestial bodies. You get the mad bit where all the birds stopped tweeting cuz they think it's night. All of that was amazing. The other amazing thing is we were on the common just hundreds, thousands of people all around us all doing the same thing. The weird communal experience. So, I know I sound like some kind of enlightened hippie when I say that, but it was a genuinely lovely moment last night. >> Good feeling. >> Um so, so I am you know, Cobra is is very important in its own right, but >> It's Cobra is over hyped. Come on. Cobra you know, everyone thinks it sounds like it's a ninja and it is obviously the cabinet office meeting room whatever it is, briefing room A. Um and the result of the the drought the briefing after the drought, I think you warned this yesterday Steve, wasn't very much, was it? >> I I think no, it wasn't very it wasn't very much. But look, on Cobra, it can perform a really important function. Like what I would flag is, let's remember back to the COVID pandemic when Boris Johnson failed to hold any Cobra for much of the run into it because they weren't gripping it. So, as much as Cobra's may be symbolic and yesterday's was perhaps not, they equally kind of fill fulfill a really important function trying to concentrate the government's mind on an issue of the day. And sometimes not holding them is a symbol that the government is failing to actually grip really important things as we saw back then. That is a terrible answer Steve. I appreciate I said both are important and not cheesy. >> [laughter] >> Steve, you are a sickeningly reasonable man, but that's what's that's what you're employed by the times to be. So, good luck to you. Thank you so much for joining us. >> Thanks Steve. >> He is the Times political editor. And I I do say this often, but you know, of all the people who work in political journalism, Steve really is very very very close to what is going on. So, you should always read what he has to say in the Times and listen to him when he pops up on Times Radio.