

# Why the term 'working people' matters

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I have long criticised Labour's (or at least Starmer's and Reeves') perpetual reference to 'working people'. I object to 'hard-working people' even more.

I have always said that using that statement was exclusionary. After all, many people cannot work because they are too young, too old, are students, are sick or have disabilities that prevent them from doing so, and maybe simply do not have the opportunity to do so available to them in the area where they live. This term has always been politically incoherent and a hostage to fortune, seeming to make it clear that no one but those at work matter.

But now, apparently, Labour cannot even decide who of those at work matter to them.

If you have investment income as well as income from work, are you a working person? The distinction matters: about twenty per cent of the population have enough investment income to notice it.

And if you employ someone, are you then disqualified as a working person? If so, I would have been for almost the whole of my working life. It seems possible that Labour thinks this is the case.

And what if you earn more than twice the median wage? Are you then working? Or is it something else that you're doing?

It is very clear that Labour cannot answer these questions. Even this morning, Pat McFadden, whose high status in Labour is exceptionally difficult to explain, has been quite unable to answer these questions when on the morning interview round that ministers are sent out to do with the aim of explaining Labour's position.

We have to come to some conclusions in that case.

The first is that Labour picked a description of those in whose interests it is acting that makes no sense.

Second, they never had the intellectual curiosity to define the term they used.

Third, they did not have the imagination to think that others might want to explore this issue.

Fourth, they never imagined themselves walking into a trap of their own making as a result and so never prepared a defence for what they were claiming to do.

Fifth, this indicates arrogance, stupidity, or both permeates their thinking.

Sixth, if it is fair to ask, as a result, if they are really up to the job they are doing because this failure to define the most basic of terms that they chose to use suggests that they are not.

And you wonder why I despair?