

New migration policy causes stress for Labour

The New Immigration Bill before the Commons yesterday carries out one of the promises of the government over Brexit. It takes powers to repeal freedom of movement from the EU into the UK , establishing a migration system for EU countries which will be the same as the system for the rest of the world. This could come into effect shortly after March 29 if we leave then, but would be delayed for a couple of years were the UK to enter into a Withdrawal Agreement and so called Transition.

The government has not provided many of the details about how the powers will be used. It has stated that it wants to base its common worldwide migration policy on allowing the recruitment of talent from anywhere around the globe. It is likely talent will be defined by a minimum salary or wage for a job the person is coming to accept, but clearly it could be qualification based as well or additionally. Students will be allowed then as now to come to recognised UK institutions to study an approved course, and faculty members allowed to reflect the international nature of much modern scholarship.

Labour decided they could not oppose this measure. After all they had promised to end freedom of movement, and seemed to understand the views of many of their voters on this issue. Some in the Union movement did feel that allowing too many people into low -aid jobs from abroad undercut British workers and tended to help keep pay down. Late in the day Labour under pressure on social media and from some of its own backbench MPs decided to switch course and ask them to vote against it. Apparently Labour changed its mind and felt that the policy would be too restrictive on migration after all.

What criteria would you want the government to use when deciding who can gain entry to work here? This legislation takes back control, but leaves many questions unanswered about how exactly we should use the new powers we gain once we have left the EU.