

Closure of Remploy Edinburgh Factory condemned

The UK Government has taken a decision to close the Remploy plants in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Motherwell, putting 111 jobs at risk. Clare Adamson, a member of the Education and Culture Committee and SNP MSP for Central Scotland who visited Remploy Motherwell in October last year and responded to the consultation on its future, said she was “extremely disappointed” with the UK’s decision.

She said: -“The SNP is extremely disappointed with the way the UK Government has come to these conclusions and with the decision they have come to. I will be in contact with the UK Minister to seek reassurances and to find out what support they will be making available to those affected.

“I was hugely impressed with the work done at Remploy Netherton in Motherwell and the difference supported employment can make to people’s lives.

“Some people affected may find the transition to other workplaces easy to make but for many it will be very difficult and the UK government must support them properly.

“It should be noted that Clydebank, Cowdenbeath, Dundee and Stirling Remploy units are not facing the threat of immediate closure but have been labelled with a ‘potentially viable’ status so it is important there is clarity for all employees as soon as possible.”

Commenting on today’s closure announcement, Ian Murray, Labour MP for Edinburgh South said:

“I am absolutely appalled at the way in which the Government have announced this decision. Ministers have shown a complete disregard for some of the most vulnerable workers in

Edinburgh.

"The uncertainty which now hangs over the employees affected is completely unacceptable. I am deeply concerned that these employees will now only be given 90 days to plan their future. The government must recognise that they are dealing with the most vulnerable members of the workforce and I will be demanding that Ministers reconsider this. This Tory led Government have consistently attacked the most vulnerable and think that their lack of a growth strategy will be resolved by sacking rather than backing workers."

Shadow Work and Pensions Minister Liam Byrne made the following statement on future of Remploy: Responding to the Government's Written Statement in the future of Remploy, Labour's Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary Liam Byrne said, *"The Welfare Reform Bill has been law for just a week, and the government's first callous act is to throw hundreds of disabled people straight on the dole. Two-thirds of Remploy factories will now be shut and their workers, thrown into the market-place with just £2,500 to help them get another job, with no guarantees about the factories that are briefly spared. It is frankly outrageous that the government has tried to smuggle out the news on the day of the Parliament's celebration of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee. We will be demanding that ministers are summoned to the House of Commons to explain themselves.*

Quite simply this is the wrong plan at the wrong time. Unemployment is going through the roof. Back to work schemes are sinking under the weight of spiralling unemployment. And the government thinks this is a good time to sack disabled workers. In 2007, Chris Grayling, said in Parliament;

'Let me assure Remploy and its employees that the next conservative government will continue the process of identifying additional potential procurement opportunities for them and the public sector workforce'. Now we know the truth.

People with disabilities will never trust a word they say again."

Labour has demanded answers to ten key questions:

1. When will the factories start closing?
2. Why are workers being given only 90 days to plan their future?
3. How many staff will be made compulsorily redundant?
4. Will the government guarantee that Remploy's budgets will now be ring-fenced to help people with disabilities back to work?
5. What is the future of the Remploy company? Is it the government's policy to in effect close it down?
6. Specifically, what is the support that will be given to workers to get another job?
7. What are the total costs of shutting down the Remploy factories, including redundancies and costs of settling suppliers
8. What are the redundancy terms for workers?
9. Will workers' rights to pensions they have paid for be protected?
10. Why did no minister offer to come to the House of Commons to make a statement?