

# A Precariat Charter: the new Magna Carta to challenge neo-liberalism

The following is from Guy Standing's book **A Precariat Charter: From Denizens to Citizens** (London and New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2014). Other relevant books by Standing include **Basic Income: A Transformative Policy for India** (with S. Davala, R. Jhabvala and S.Kapoor Mehta (London and New Delhi: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015) and **The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class** (London and New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2011).

## **Article 1: Redefine work as productive and reproductive activity**

All forms of work should be recognized and valued, not just paid labour.

## **Article 2: Reform labour statistics**

Labour statistics need to count all forms of work and reflect realities of work to guide policies that respect non-labourist and ecological values.

## **Article 3: Make recruitment practices brief encounters**

Incentives should discourage using prolonged and complex recruitment procedures that impose high costs on the precariat in terms of money, time and stress.

## **Article 4: Regulate flexible labour**

Opposes the loss of rights and other consequences in a system that lacks regulation and social protection and for workers such as interns.

## **Article 5: Promote associational freedom**

The precariat needs voice to give it agency, the capacity to defend and further its interests, individually and collectively. Labour unions can play a role but community and occupational associations are more important to the precariat.

## **Articles 6 – 10: Reconstruct occupational communities**

Reconstruction includes setting up an international occupational accreditation system; rolling back unnecessary licensing designed to reduce entry, or allow commercial firms to set standards from which they can profit; ensure that occupational boards represent all interests; promote collaborative bargaining; and promote occupational social protection.

## **Articles 11 – 15: Stop class-based migration policy**

Migrants should have the same rights as everyone else; demonization of migrants should be stopped. Includes curbing labour export regimes, ensuring that the route to citizenship is transparent and fair, stopping benefit discrimination and avoiding social apartheid.

## **Article 16: Ensure due process for all**

Protect citizens from arbitrary power of the state and ensure that other rights including political rights, legal proceedings, and labour market policies are enforced and protected.

## **Article 17: Remove poverty traps and precarity traps**

Moralistic posturing has replaced equitable and rational policy. Until traps are removed, no-one should be penalized for acting rationally in the circumstances they face.

## **Article 18: Make a bonfire of benefit assessment tests**

Governments should restrict assessment tests to the minimum possible for means-testing, unemployment benefits, disability tests, pensioner tests and charity qualification tests.

## **Article 19: Stop demonizing the disabled**

Social and economic rights of the disabled must be strengthened, with benefits related to needs, not work capabilities.

## **Article 20: Stop workfare now!**

Workfare is the unfair practice of compulsory labour as a condition for receiving benefits and can require benefit recipients to do labour-related activities or lose entitlements.

## **Article 21: Regulate payday and student loans**

Payday loans should be made residual and rare, while public subsidies for education should reduce the role and burden of student loans.

## **Article 22: Institute a right to financial knowledge and advice**

Everyone should have the right to affordable financial advice and the real opportunity to gain financial knowledge.

## **Article 23: Decommodify education**

Restore public control of education and put enlightenment values at the heart of education.

## **Article 24: Make a bonfire of subsidies**

Subsidies distort markets, are regressive, redistribute from low-income to high-income groups and interests. They benefit the precariat the least.

## **Article 25: Move towards a universal basic income**

New measures must be introduced to overhaul the social protection system. Having basic income security makes collective social action more likely rather than less; recipients are more inclined to be altruistic and generous towards those less fortunate; and provides predictability which enables people to cut debts and make savings to protect themselves. Basic income would address the insecurities and needs of the precariat, would be less bureaucratic and disciplinarian, and would address inequalities. A living wage is desirable but is not an alternative to a basic income.

## **Article 26: Share capital via sovereign wealth funds**

A new system of distribution must be built so that all who contribute to society can share in the financial wealth and the social dividends of natural resources and technological innovation.

## **Article 27: Revive the commons**

The physical, social and information commons must be protected and revived. This matters more for the precariat than for any other social interest.

## **Article 28: Revive deliberative democracy**

This is the only way to overcome the commodification of politics and thinning of democracy, and to ensure that the aspirations and insecurities of the precariat are given priority over utilitarian trends.

## **Article 29: Re-marginalize charities**

Charities should not substitute for rights-based state policy and should be reduced to a residual, providing supplementary comfort, empathy and environmental revival. ■