



EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS BILL: Campaigning perspectives for trade unionists

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WHO AND WHAT

- ▶ Adrian Weir - Assistant Secretary, Campaign for Trade Union Freedom; previously worked for T&G/Unite for 35 years, left as Assistant Chief of Staff
- ▶ In 2013 the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions merged with the United Campaign to form Campaign for Trade Union Freedom
- ▶ During the Coalition we campaigned against the Beecroft proposals to limit employment rights (commissioned by Lib Dem Vince Cable) plus the Tory's Enterprise & Regulatory Reform Act, 2013 and Growth & Infrastructure Act, 2013; the former made detrimental changes to ET procedure, the latter allowed for the employment rights to be traded for shares in the company
- ▶ We campaigned against the Trade Union Act, 2016 that introduced majorities and super majorities for industrial action ballots, increased the notice period unions had to give employers in industrial action and made it "opt in" to the Political Fund.
- ▶ We campaigned against the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act, 2023 that effectively removed the right to strike in important public services.

New Deal for Working People #1

- ▶ During the Corbyn years leading figures from the IER (**John Hendy, Keith Ewing, Carolyn Jones** worked with senior Labour figures (**John McDonnell, Laura Pidcock, Andy McDonald**) to draw up proposals for a new framework of labour law to more than reverse the pro-employer legal bias evident since 1980
- ▶ Fair Pay Agreements – achieved through statutory sector wide collective bargaining – covering but not limited to – pay & pensions, working time & holidays, training, work organisation and diversity & inclusion
- ▶ The decline in the coverage of collective bargaining is directly correlated to the decline in the share of national wealth going to wages and salaries
- ▶ Labour committed to repealing anti-union legislation; the laws regarding industrial action should comply with international standards such as the ILO and the European Social Charter

New Deal for Working People #2

- ▶ Strengthen trade unions' right of entry to workplaces to organise, meet and represent their members and potential members
- ▶ Review statutory recognition, current thresholds too high, maybe unions with 50% membership in bargaining unit should get automatic recognition
- ▶ Will create a single status of “worker”
- ▶ Will give all workers day one rights
- ▶ Will outlaw fire and rehire
- ▶ Will ban zero hours contracts
- ▶ Will establish a Single Enforcement Body

Employment Rights Bill

- ▶ The Bill when published seemed to be a long way short of what was promised in *New Deal for Working People*
- ▶ CTUF held two webinars last autumn addressed by our speakers and:
 - ▶ **Jo Grady**, General Secretary, UCU
 - ▶ **Fran Heathcote**, General Secretary, PCS
- ▶ Notwithstanding encouraging noises from Congress House it was becoming clear that there were problems with the Bill; CTUF organised a rally in March with speakers from across the movement including **John McDonnell MP**, **John Hendy** and **Keith Ewing** (both involved in drafting NDWP), **Eddie Dempsey** (General Secretary, RMT) and from Nautilus, GMB/Amazon, PCS, Unite, TSSA
- ▶ Key outcome of the rally, call for an Employment Rights #2 Bill

Problems with the Employment Rights Bill

- ▶ Anti-union laws: repeal of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 partial repeal on the Trade Union Act 2016 – in other words the anti-union laws from that Thatcher/Major period will stay in place
- ▶ Only two sector wide “collective bargaining” forums are established – adult social care and school support staff – not collective bargaining as SoS holds executive authority and no provision to roll out to other sectors
- ▶ On zero hours contracts – employers must offer contract based on “guaranteed hours” over a reference period but insufficient safeguards to prevent workers being coerced into not accepting the offer
- ▶ Fire and rehire not banned absolutely, employers given escape hatch of substantial business reason to remain solvent; does not ban P&O Ferries style fire and replace
- ▶ Single status of “worker” – not legislated for – consultation will start soon – will require primary legislation – is this way in for ERB #2?

Problems with the Employment Rights Bill

- ▶ Bill will receive Royal Assent shortly but huge consultation process (two years) about to begin on the Regulations to be made under the authority of the Act
- ▶ Even before the Regulations are published what was a slim Green Paper, *New Deal for Working People*, has turned into 300 pages of primary law, a gift for lawyers probably not for workers
- ▶ The underlying focus of the Bill is to give workers individual rights, to be enforced through the Employment Tribunal, not about restoring trade union power
- ▶ The average wait for an Employment Tribunal hearing is around **335 days** (approximately one year) from the claim being lodged, longer for complex cases
- ▶ Research has shown that in 2013 51% of successful applicants were never paid their compensation by employers; in 2025 it's suggested that may have risen to 75%

Campaigning for Employment Rights #2

Bill – who's in



<http://bit.ly/DemandERB2>

Over 1400 individuals and 15 unions have signed up, inc

- ▶ PCS
- ▶ NEU
- ▶ POA
- ▶ FBU
- ▶ Bakers', Food & Allied Workers' Union
- ▶ Equity
- ▶ GFTU

Campaigning for Employment Rights #2

Bill – 10 key demands

Finishing the Job

- ▶ Repeal the anti-union laws
- ▶ Proper ban on fire and rehire
- ▶ End all zero hours contracts
- ▶ £15/hour minimum wage with no age exemptions
- ▶ Statutory support for sector wide collective bargaining

Demand ERB #2

- ▶ UK labour laws to comply with international standards
- ▶ Universal employment rights, inc those on working visas, through single worker status
- ▶ Day 1 employment rights
- ▶ Full trade union access to workplaces
- ▶ Positive right to strike

Links to articles by CTUF Officers on ERB

- ▶ <https://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/article/union-activists-and-supporters-call-for-major-improvements-to-employment-rights-bill>
- ▶ <https://labouroutlook.org/2025/07/03/the-billionaire-coup-against-democracy/>
- ▶ <https://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/article/employment-rights-bill-does-not-go-far-enough>
- ▶ <https://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/article/employment-rights-bill-has-very-long-road-ahead>
- ▶ <https://thepeoplesassembly.org.uk/2025/07/08/free-trade-unions-are-an-essential-component-in-anti-austerity-campaigns>
- ▶ <https://yorkshirebylines.co.uk/politics/the-employment-rights-bill-not-up-to-the-job>

Campaign for Trade Union Freedom: affiliate your branch or join individually



**CAMPAIGN FOR
TRADE UNION
FREEDOM**

**Effective employment rights need
strong trade unions.**

CTUF campaigns for:

- » **Collective bargaining agreements
across all sectors of the economy**
- » **The right to strike and to take solidarity action**
- » **The repeal of anti-trade union laws**

**Join the fight back.
Join the Campaign for Trade Union Freedom.**

“The Campaign for Trade Union Freedom (CTUF) has a long and solid history of fighting for trade union rights and freedoms. CTUF has been at the forefront of calls to repeal the anti-union laws and now it's leading the fight to roll out sectoral collective bargaining across all sectors of the economy. RMT sees the fight for sectoral collective bargaining as critical to rebuilding workers' power, renewing the unions and regenerating our communities so I would urge you to join us and affiliate to the Campaign.”

Eddie Dempsey, RMT General Secretary

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Website: www.tradeunionfreedom.co.uk Bluesky: [@unionfreedom.bsky.social](https://unionfreedom.bsky.social) Email: office@tradeunionfreedom.org.uk

CAMPAIGN FOR TRADE UNION FREEDOM

For the past 40 years different governments have sought to undermine and shackle trade unions, to limit their ability to organise, bargain collectively and to make it even harder for workers to legitimately fight back by taking strike action.

Since the early 1970s at the time of the Pentonville 5, the Campaign, then known as the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, has been at the forefront of campaigning against anti-union laws. We seek to work within the movement in mobilising opposition, and our current campaign to build on the Employment Rights Act is just the latest example of resistance.

Our Campaign has affiliates from national trade unions, regional and local branches, trade union councils, and individual subscribers. CTUF affiliates receive a regular printed newsletter, e-mail and social media updates and invitations to attend our meetings and rallies.

**There has never been a more important time
for active solidarity across the movement. Join us today.**

Union/TUC	Affiliation costs: National Unions 100,000+ £650 Less than 100,000 £150 Union Regions £75 Union Branches 500+ £75 Union Branches less than 500/ Trade Union Councils £35 Strike Committees, Union Supporting Organisations & Individuals £15
National/Region/Branch	
Name of Secretary	
Address	
E-mail	
We may contact you with information about the Campaign.	



The Campaign for Trade Union Freedom is sponsored by 25 national trade union organisations, and over 200 branches, trades councils and individuals. It is financed solely by supporters fees from trade union bodies and individuals. By becoming a supporter you or your organisation show your agreement with the call to repeal the anti-trade union laws, and aid the Campaign's fight. Please make cheques payable to Campaign, for Trade Union Freedom and send to: CTUF, 4th Floor, 1 Islington, Liverpool, L3 8EG, or by scanning the QR code above for other options. Donations gratefully received.