

FAIR TRADE UNION AND EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS



ARGUING FOR THE ALTERNATIVE

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We are not second class citizens – workers rights are human rights too

This Tory-led Government is currently making plans to weaken both individual employment rights and trade union freedoms as a central element of its plan to shift the burden for our economic difficulties onto the backs of working people.

We will not sit back and allow this to happen!

Promoting the self interests of employers groups over millions of working people is not just wrong but dangerous. Growing insecurities, unemployment and isolation – coupled with the alienation of our young – will only serve to undermine community cohesion and the social fabric of our society.

THEY SAY

- Basic employment rights and workplace protections are simply burdensome 'red tape'.
- That 'red tape' destroys jobs and prevents economic growth. That trade unions must be weakened and employment protections removed to provide a competitive environment for business to grow.
- That if working people organise to fight back, defend their interests or resist change they will legislate to make this even harder to do within the law.

WE SAY

- Government should be standing up for hard working people, our families and communities, not the narrow self interest of big business.
- Effective trade unionism provides a social balance – promoting fairness and progress – UK workers will not be treated as second class citizens within Europe; quick, easy and cheap to sack.
- That economic growth depends on collective bargaining – trade unions ensure a fairer distribution of wealth to those who will spend it – **YOU**.

There is an alternative

- Protect the jobs we have and create new ones by building the social and affordable housing we so desperately need, updating our national energy, telecommunications and transport infrastructure.
- Invest now in our manufacturing industries and downstream supply chain, green technologies, public services and the training of our young.
- Put the debt (including interest payments) at the feet of those that caused the crisis; **banks must repay every penny borrowed to bail them out**
- Crackdown on tax havens, tax evasion and avoidance by those who can afford to pay their fair share to address the deficit.
- Support trade union rights; protecting workers, their families and wider communities and redistributing the wealth we create throughout our society.

ACTION FOR THE ALTERNATIVE:

- Write to your MP asking that they support the alternative to the governments cuts strategy.
- Organise your members to visit their MP's surgery – ask for their support for fair trade union and employment rights.
- Support and argue for your unions campaign for the alternative at your workplace – growth, tax justice, fairness and justice for UK workers.

United Kingdom vs. everyone else

We have long argued that UK workers suffer from some of the worst employment protections in the world, leaving workers as second class citizens within the EU and the security of our core industries open to the whims of profit driven boards. The ease at which corporate giants are able to secure tax payer funded loans, grants and incentives only to close UK operations and relocate across the globe is a national scandal.

UK PLC has been put up for sale by successive governments who have refused to recognise the need to protect either our national interests or those of UK workers.

Further attacking employment and social protection is not a growth strategy!

- UK workers remain the cheapest, easiest and quickest to sack in Europe. This is not a protection but an escape route for companies relocating.
- Legislation restricting industrial action – including solidarity action – is a breach of United Nations conventions and decisions of the Council of Europe. The UK government is currently being challenged in the international courts.

“Employment security and wider social progress has only ever been achieved as a result of collective struggle... it is only secure for as long as it can be protected by an organised trade union and labour movement”

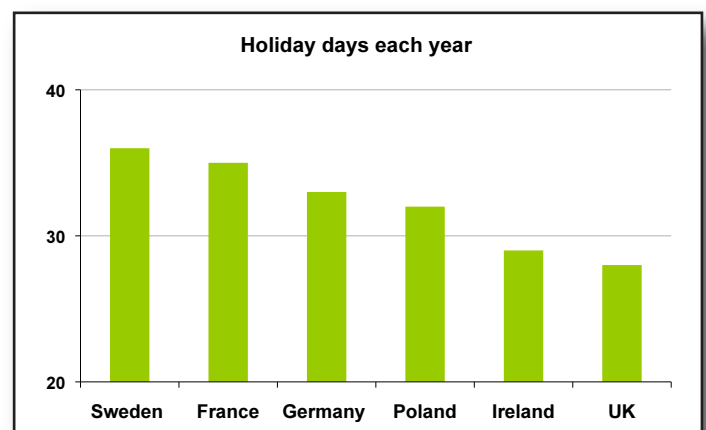
Why does your government allow you to be treated as second class citizens in Europe – protecting the rights of employers against the interests of the majority?

This is a clear political choice.

- They choose to provide UK workers with fewer and less generous employment rights.
- They choose to restrict your unions ability to defend and improve conditions through negotiation, and;
- They choose to deny you collective rights to fight back – including the fundamental right to strike and take solidarity action in support of others, rights enjoyed by workers across Europe and much of the world.

Latest figures from the OECD and Eurostat demonstrate that;

- The UK's richest earn more than the poorest do across all but four of the developed economies in the world; only the USA, Korea, Canada and Ireland have bigger gaps than us.
- People in the UK work some of the longest hours per week in Europe – just five countries work longer; Greece, Austria, Macedonia, Iceland and Turkey.
- Women in the UK experience one of the worst gender pay gaps in Europe – just five European countries are worse.
- The UK has one of the worst rates for people being at risk of poverty in Europe – only two EU member states are worse and we have one of the highest incidences of low pay amongst all developed economies in the world.



In trade union organised workplaces average earnings are 23% higher than in non-union workplaces. Trade union organised workplaces are also safer and members benefit from improved conditions as well as higher levels of respect and dignity on the job.

It's all about power

The reality is that trade unions are the only bodies capable of organising an effective opposition and resistance to the attack working people are currently facing. It is therefore no surprise that government, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and the right wing media are preparing further attacks on your collective right to defend your interests.

Leading tory voices led by London Mayor, Boris Johnson, have joined the CBI in calling for bigger hurdles for lawful industrial action to be erected and attacks on union facility time. Business Secretary, Vince Cable, has already issued veiled threats that strike action by workers against the demolishing of our public services will be met with further restrictions on balloting thresholds.

All we demand for working people is fairness – the same security and protections for UK workers enjoyed by other workers across Europe:

- THE RIGHT TO ORGANISE
- THE RIGHT TO BARGAIN COLLECTIVELY
- THE RIGHT TO STRIKE

This attack on trade unions and your collective rights is ideological. As demonstrated above, attacks over recent years have directly assisted corporations transfer profits from wage packets to share dividends. This government recognises the fact that it is strong, independent trade unions that ensure the redistribution of wealth into the hands of working people. They fail to accept however that it is working people who will spend it, something desperately needed if we are to grow our economy.

On an individual front government continues to argue that the UK is 'overburdened with red tape' and are preparing proposals to restrict your rights to claim unfair dismissal and compensation for discrimination while attacking your rights during consultations on transfer and redundancy. In reality we have some of the fewest employment protections for people in both permanent and temporary employment amongst all developed economies – only the USA and Canada have less.

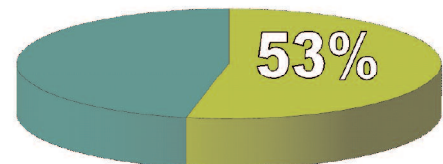
Free trade unions are central to making Britain a fairer and more equal society

The ability of trade unions to organise and operate freely within society is not simply an issue of democracy. Free trade unionism is central to social progress, fairness and justice and this principle is supported by progressive governments across the globe. Growing our economy, putting people back to work and paying tax – rather than drawing benefits – investing in our young and supporting strategic sectors through government support and procurement is the only sensible way to address our current economic difficulties.

workers share of GDP in 1975



workers share of GDP in 2008



Increasing the spending power of working people is key to generating demand in our high streets and for services that will deliver economic growth. Our trade union organisation and free collective bargaining are the only progressive tools we have for ensuring this happens.

Attacking employment rights and free trade unionism is not a growth strategy – what we are seeing in the UK is an opportunistic attack on working people, our families and communities by an ideologically driven government in the interests of big business.

It is for the trade union and Labour movement to argue the alternative; a vision of full employment, social justice, dignity at work and in retirement and a fair distribution of the wealth created by working people across society.

There is an alternative, these are political decisions, not an economic necessity, and we can shape and change those decisions if we choose to do so – by standing together, proud and united, **YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

Trade union and employee rights at work – the alternative...

- Stop treating UK workers as second class citizens in Europe.
- Legislate to give practical effect to signed international conventions and charters protecting the right of workers to; **organise, bargain collectively and take strike action.**
- Provide UK workers and our communities with the same protections as the best of those in the EU when facing hostile takeovers, transfer of employment or product, a relocation of production and/or closure of UK facilities.
- Introduce a requirement for corporate social and community responsibility provisions alongside trade union engagement (industrial democracy) into any provision of state support.
- Stop attacking and undermining individual employment rights and protections afforded to UK workers.
- Ensure proper protection is afforded to workers against dismissal or detriment when taking lawful industrial action.
- Protect worker representatives from detriment, dismissal and blacklisting while providing for the proper provision of facilities and time to do their job.



It's your money, your job,
your hospital, your kid's
future ...

Create jobs –
and build a
STRONGER
FUTURE FOR ALL