



Dear Friends,

Over the next few weeks the House of Lords will discuss the Trade Union Bill, which threatens the basic right to strike. I'm writing to union members, with the general secretaries of the TUC's affiliated unions, ahead of that debate.

For the first time, employers will be able to break strikes by bringing in agency workers to cover for strikers. This could have big safety implications, lead to worse public services, and will undermine the right to strike.

And the bill proposes huge restrictions on peaceful picketing and protests. The lead person on a picket will have to give their name to the police – raising concerns about blacklisting and victimisation. There are lots of other proposals in the bill too – including attacks on union reps in the public sector, restrictions on how unions collect and spend their money and lots more unnecessary red tape. All of it taken together fundamentally undermines the right to strike.

WHY SHOULD WE BE CONCERNED?

If this bill passes, the right to strike will be under threat. That'll shift the balance of power at work even further in favour of employers. Ordinary workers will find it much harder to stand up to their bosses – even when it's clear that an employer is being unfair and unreasonable. And that'll mean worse pay and conditions for everyone, and staff afraid to raise concerns about service cuts and safety. This government is determined to get the Trade Union Bill through Parliament with as little scrutiny as possible. We must not let them get away with it.

HEARTUNIONS WEEK OF ACTION 8-14 FEBRUARY 2016

From the 8 to 14 February 2016, the TUC and all our member unions will run a week of action against the Trade Union Bill. Called heartunions, it will showcase the vital work unions do – and tell the wider public why the Trade Union Bill threatens it.

Please join us in marking the heartunions week of action in your workplace or community. Throughout the week we're asking union members to tell the stories of how union reps have helped ordinary members – and to ask anyone who's not yet in a union to join.

On Tuesday 9 February, we'll host 'The Big Workplace Meeting', with Frances O'Grady and a very special guest beaming live into branch meetings all over the UK. And on Thursday 11 February we'll be asking every trade union member to do something to make trade unions visible and proud in your community. All the information you need is at heartunions.org.

Threatening the right to strike and to organise has no place in a modern democracy. So let's show the government and the House of Lords that we are a modern, vibrant movement, and if they attack us, we'll respond by growing stronger.

Yours sincerely,

TUC General Secretary

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