

TUC CAMPAIGN PLAN 2015

NEW CHALLENGES,
CHANGING PRIORITIES

JOBS | DEMOCRACY | RIGHTS | EQUALITY | SOLIDARITY



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Frances O'Grady

TUC General Secretary



Photography

INTRODUCTION

The new majority Conservative government is intent on implementing a divisive manifesto that will hurt working families, damage our economy and make inequality even worse.

While the TUC is always ready to engage with the country's elected government and press the interests of people at work, undoubtedly we face tough challenges. With jobs, services, union organisation and even the democratic rights of union members under threat, we will need to campaign as never before.

The UK's slow and hesitant recovery has failed to reach many people and has left the wider economic challenges we face unaddressed. Tax giveaways at the top with deep public service spending cuts for the rest will not deliver the stronger, fairer growth we need.

Thousands more jobs – many of them unionised – are planned to go across the public sector. Too many of them will be replaced by insecure zero-hours jobs with few prospects.

A toxic mix of extreme cuts, privatisation and sell-offs risks ripping the heart out of the public sector, with special dangers for our NHS.

Shrinking the state is bad for the private sector too. A failure to invest for the future in education and skills, social housing, science and UK infrastructure will hit the prosperity of everyone.

Deep cuts to welfare can only be achieved by hitting the vulnerable and slashing the help that millions of low paid workers need to make ends meet – the very blue collar hard workers Conservatives claim to champion.

Conservative proposals to change the laws governing trades unions shift the balance of power even further against working people, making legal strikes much harder and undermining civil liberties into the bargain. Attacks on trade unions – the only independent democratic organisations representing

working people – show this government's true colours. After the longest fall in living standards since Queen Victoria was on the throne, the government is determined to weaken workers' bargaining power and strip us of our best chance of improving pay and security at work.

The task that trade unions face is to build our strength in workplaces and reach out to communities. We need to win new allies and maximise pressure on the government to resist their worst proposals. We need to show that migrant workers are not to blame for low pay and lousy jobs; exploitation is. But opposition is never enough.

We need to construct a movement for a positive alternative based on an end to austerity economics. We must set out practical plans for improving investment, productivity and living standards to deliver stronger, fairer growth. We must show how the best performing economies are built on a fair society, great public services and decent rights for all.

That is no easy challenge. We will need new thinking, new tactics and new approaches. But the solidarity and shared values upon which the trade union movement is built hold true and our ranks are resilient. That gives us a strong foundation on which to win – not just for our members but for our wider communities too.

Frances

Frances O'Grady
TUC General Secretary

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A POSITIVE VISION

Two years ago we set out a campaign plan based on the economy, pay, public services and welfare, rights and voice at work, and strong unions.

Together, we helped shape the terrain on which the election was fought – on living standards, public services and the need for a fairer, stronger recovery. We know that our arguments resonated with many people. We must retain and build on this support, influencing the political and public debate wherever we can, working with allies across the political spectrum and in wider civil society.

At the same time, we must be relentless in holding the government to account, with broad-based campaigning, policy and analysis rooted in our positive vision and long-term goals.

We will make a compelling case for a new economic approach, securing high productivity, wages-led growth, good jobs and a rebalanced economy.

A key part of this must be a modern industrial policy based on investment, intervention and skills that can speed the move to a low-carbon economy, spread growth to the regions and create fulfilling, skilled and secure jobs.

We will continue to push our case that one of the best ways to redistribute wealth is through collective bargaining, alongside a hike in the national minimum wage and spreading the living wage; together with proposals for sector-based higher pay floors and action on skills, conditions and productivity in those sectors that can do better.

We know that cutting employment rights doesn't deliver productive workforces – nor help us compete on the global stage. Some of our greatest industries also have some of the strongest union agreements, such as in our automotive sector. We need fair treatment at work and increased employee voice, not reductions in vital protections. We will argue for greater democracy in the workplace by giving workers a voice on the board, on top pay committees and

through extending consultation and representation rights and paid facility time for union reps who make our workplaces healthier, safer and fairer.

Our work on exploitation and casualisation at work has been influential. We will build on the progress we have made, campaigning to stop abusive zero-hours contracts, bogus self-employment and the exploitation of migrant workers. We will campaign for the effective enforcement of employment rights and for an end to the employment tribunal fees that have priced working people out of justice.

Well-funded public services are central to a fair society, and to a fairer economy too. Enabling parents to take on decent jobs relies on high quality, flexible childcare. Making sure that young people have the skills they need requires investment in education. And excellent health services support the whole workforce.

And we will continue with the work that strengthens our foundations as a movement, training thousands of union reps, supporting unions to organise effectively, and challenging the government to drop short-sighted cuts to trade union education.

We will make a compelling case for a new economic approach, securing high productivity, wages-led growth, good jobs and a rebalanced economy.



NEW WAYS OF WORKING

The environment we're working in has changed. We will set out a positive vision of trade unions as we know them to be: a democratic force for fairness in the modern workplace.

At the same time we must be ready to head off and respond to the threats we face.

We're going to need to build surprising alliances, to engage with government where we can, to use local and regional opportunities and to support unions and their members where they choose to take action. Above all we are going to need to be united.

Agenda-setting work on our economic vision and stronger unions, as set out above, will underpin our entire programme of work. The rest of this document goes into more detail on plans for activity in five key areas:

1. PROTECTING WORKERS' RIGHT TO STRIKE

2. AN END TO AUSTERITY ECONOMICS

3. A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY EUROPE

4. MAKING DEVOLUTION AND DECENTRALISATION WORK FOR PEOPLE

5. REACHING OUT TO YOUNG WORKERS



- 1 Frances O'Grady visits the Mini plant in Cowley
- 2 Activists engage with the public during Fair Pay Fortnight
- 3 Training for union reps helps organising efforts
- 4 Unions are campaigning against changes to strike laws
- 5 Reaching out to the public over fair pay

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1. PROTECTING WORKERS' RIGHT TO STRIKE

THE CHALLENGE

The government has announced a Trade Union Bill which proposes changes to the law aimed at weakening unions, undermining the right to strike and giving bad employers more ways to challenge us in the courts.

The government's proposals set out to:

- * undermine the right to strike by letting employers use agency workers as cover for striking workers
- * introduce unreasonable hurdles such as fines if workers set up a Facebook account without giving two weeks' notice in advance of a strike, or letting an employer claim damages against a union if a picket supervisor forgets to wear their armband

- * introduce undemocratic strike ballot thresholds.

Other proposals include changes to political funds, further crackdowns on union reps, and changes to the way unions are regulated. Trade unions will be more tightly regulated than any other voluntary sector organisation.

The government is not just proposing extra red tape that will make life a bit more difficult for trade unions. They are launching an assault on the democratic organisations of working people.

As well as being an attack on fundamental liberties, these reforms will act to lower living standards for the majority of working people – whether or not they are union members – by undermining unions' abilities to bargain and set the pace for better pay and conditions at work.

WE WILL

- * highlight the illiberal and anti-democratic nature of the proposals
- * develop the widest possible campaign against the Trade Union Bill, working across all political parties in the Commons and Lords
- * organise a major mass lobby of parliament and rally
- * challenge outdated stereotypes about strikes and trade unions, and show the real face of modern trade unionism
- * expose the damage the new rules would cause to industrial relations and sensible dispute resolution
- * campaign for safe and secure electronic and workplace balloting as an alternative to thresholds
- * support union efforts to defend and build workplace organisation.

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2. AN END TO AUSTERITY ECONOMICS

THE CHALLENGE

Britain is back in recovery. But the recovery was the slowest in Britain's history – unnecessarily delayed by cuts and austerity economics. The recovery has passed many by, with those hardest hit by the recession seeing little or no benefit. And it is fragile. Pre-crash problems of low investment and productivity have not been tackled. Although wages are now growing faster than prices this has more to do with ultra-low inflation than sustained, healthy wage growth.

And yet, over the next few years, the Chancellor is planning to continue the biggest peacetime public service spending cuts since the 1920s. They will have a devastating effect on vital public services but are also economically risky. The Chancellor's approach breaks with the international mainstream – and the advice of the OECD and IMF – that we need investment in infrastructure, homes, skills, and wage growth. And he has failed to deliver fair taxes or reform the banks which caused the crash in the first place.

WE WILL

- * make the case for a strong, balanced recovery that is fairly shared, and where improved growth and tax revenues allow the public finances to improve while services are protected
- * expose the impact and the false economy of ideologically driven cuts, privatisation and outsourcing
- * continue to campaign against the government's welfare cuts, making the case for a strong social security safety net and supporting those who need social security to live, including disabled people
- * work to support union campaigns and action across and within sectors, including in justice, the NHS, civil service, education and rail; and campaign against the impact of austerity on the voluntary and community sector, especially in supporting people facing prejudice and discrimination
- * campaign for properly funded public services, from childcare to adult social care and new social housing, to meet people's needs.

Saving our safety net

WE WILL

- * continue to make the case for protecting in-work benefits, which are vital to the incomes of many low and middle income households
- * work with grassroots groups to develop social media tools that highlight the impacts of the government's plans and organise campaign actions
- * work with unions and regions to develop a national database of media trained community advocates who can use their direct experience to make the case against social security cuts.

A strong recovery and great public services

WE WILL

- * publish new work to show how service cuts affect different types of families across the UK
- * expose the equality impact of outsourcing and privatisation
- * promote new partnership models where employers, service users and unions work together to deliver fair and efficient public services
- * campaign against cuts in skills funding and further education and speak up for continued funding for unionlearn and trade union education.



- 1 RMT cleaners picket Waterloo Station
- 2 The TUC is campaigning for safe and secure electronic balloting
- 3 RCM members march to save Lewisham Hospital
- 4 Christine Lagarde of the IMF with David Cameron and George Osborne

3. A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY EUROPE

THE CHALLENGE

The TUC wants Britain to be part of a people's Europe that is fair and fit for the challenges of the twenty-first century. The EU's single market must be balanced with a strong voice, rights and protection for ordinary people and their unions. This is important not just for the citizens of the EU, but for the global economy too.

But the Conservatives aim to renegotiate the fair bargain that lies at the heart of social Europe, offering voters a false choice. The Prime Minister wants Britain to stay in the EU but one stripped of employee rights, environmental protection and consumer safeguards. Some business leaders are encouraging him, dismissing hard-won rights – health and safety, paid holidays, consultation on redundancies, protection for outsourced workers, equal rights for part-timers and agency workers, and maternity – as “lifestyle” issues or “red tape”.

We will campaign in Europe with our allies and partners to block the treaty changes needed to attack workers' rights. We will deliver a strong message to the government that they won't win workers' referendum votes by worsening rights. And we will campaign to refresh the EU social model and deliver the green investment, decent jobs and rights, public services and the strong voice that working people need.

The progress on negotiation of new trade agreements with the US and Canada will be a key test of the direction Europe takes. Will it privilege the rights of foreign investors over citizens and workers, making it harder to bring back services under public control, or will it change course?

WE WILL

- * make the case for a twenty-first century people's EU based on fairness, not a race to the bottom
- * seek the widest possible inclusion of voters in the referendum, including 16- and 17-year-olds
- * work with our sister unions in Europe to lobby their governments to reject any proposals by David Cameron to water down the European social model
- * highlight the importance of EU-derived anti-discrimination rights; maternity rights and work and family life policies; information and consultation rights; and rights for those in casual and insecure employment
- * publish new work on how British workers benefit from social Europe and would lose out if this was weakened
- * work with employers, politicians and other campaigners who share our views
- * campaign for tough action against employers who undercut pay by exploiting migrant workers
- * continue to oppose trade agreements that privilege investors over citizens, and threaten workers' rights and public services.

- 1 Workers' rights are under threat in the forthcoming EU referendum
- 2 TTIP's deregulatory measures threaten a race to the bottom
- 3 Welsh Assembly: devolved power and social partnership
- 4 Decentralisation can offer opportunities for local campaigning
- 5 Local campaigns can save community services



4. MAKING DEVOLUTION AND DECENTRALISATION WORK FOR PEOPLE

THE CHALLENGE

The government claims it wants to devolve power and responsibility to the UK's nations, cities and regions. The much publicised 'Northern powerhouse' idea and the devolution of control of public services could offer opportunities for unions, but they also pose significant risks to national public service standards, pay arrangements and accountability, and will also have an effect on the private sector.

WE WILL

- * seek to capitalise on the opportunities of devolution and the core cities agenda to improve outcomes for working people, through union engagement, procurement and positive approaches to public services reform
- * campaign for a strong union voice in decentralised and devolved administrations, building on the social partnership model in Wales and applying positive lessons to English cities and combined authorities
- * develop good practice in procurement and commissioning so that social factors, equality, public service standards, skills and apprenticeships, employment standards and fair wages are built into contracts for public services
- * work with local authorities to develop the 'employment charter' approach introduced by councils such as Derby and Salford to promote decent standards at work
- * resist further breaking up of national bargaining and employment law, health and safety, equalities and national minimum wage legislation – on which many collective agreements build – which could lead to a race to the bottom, while recognising that we will continue to engage on behalf of our members at all levels
- * prepare and support unions in the public sector to organise and bargain effectively, even in a fragmented environment.



5. REACHING OUT TO YOUNG WORKERS

THE CHALLENGE

Young people are on the front line of austerity, often stuck in low paid jobs below their talent, sometimes saddled with student debt and with little chance of saving enough for a deposit to rent – never mind buy – a home of their own. The picture for young women, black and ethnic minority, lesbian and gay, disabled and other groups facing prejudice and discrimination is even worse.

Union membership and density among young workers is low, and young people are increasingly working in industries where jobs are insecure, staff turnover is high and there is little trade union presence.

Yet all the evidence is that many more young people support trade union values and campaigns. Our challenge is to reach out to a new generation of workers – and the next generation of union leaders – and convert that sympathy into strong union organisation.

All the evidence is that many more young people support trade union values and campaigns.

WE WILL

- * launch a major public facing campaign to run over the next two years, designed to appeal to young workers
- * carry out research, including participative work, to find out what young people want from work and unions
- * focus on the quality and experience of work for young people, and union organisation as a road to better standards at work
- * develop ways to make it easier for young people to join and be active in trade unions
- * deliver a strategy to organise young workers, including supporting union organising campaigns with young workers in the private sector.

- 1 Young workers can be trapped in casual work or bogus self-employment
- 2 We're reaching out to young people
- 3 On the front line of austerity
- 4 Many young people support trade union aims



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- * Come to the national demonstration at Conservative party conference in Manchester on 4 October 2015.
- * Mobilise union members to attend the TUC's mass lobby of parliament on the Trade Union Bill on 2 November
- * Write to your local paper about the importance of the right to strike.
- * Lobby your MP to oppose the trade union bill and support workers' rights.
- * Spread the word about the proposed restrictions on the right to strike in your local area.
- * Talk to fellow union members and your friends and family about the importance of rights at work that come from the European Union – and how the prime minister might negotiate them away.
- * Sign up to the TUC's campaign actions at: goingtowork.org.uk
- * Follow us on Twitter: [@TUCNews](https://twitter.com/TUCNews)
Facebook: [/tradesunioncongress](https://www.facebook.com/tradesunioncongress)

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PROTECT THE RIGHT TO STRIKE



TUC



RCM members joining an NHS strike over pay, St Thomas' Hospital, London © Jess Hurd/reportdigital.co.uk

SAY **NO** TO THE GOVERNMENT'S TRADE UNION BILL AND **YES** TO WORKERS' RIGHTS

- ✓ Oppose agencies breaking strikes.
- ✓ Defend the right to protest and picket.
- ✓ Keep union reps working for their members.

**Tell your MP to vote against the trade union bill
and protect the right to strike.**

#tubill www.tuc.org.uk/tubill