

Rights & Wrongs

EMPLOYEE RIGHTS
STOP
EMPLOYMENT WRONGS

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Your workplace rights are under attack

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TUC 



This magazine has been published by the TUC to launch our campaign to defend employment rights under attack from the government.

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Your workplace rights are under attack

The coalition government has made it easier for employers to sack staff, and harder for workers to take claims for bad treatment to an employment tribunal. Maternity rights are at risk and health and safety protection under fire.

But this is not a head-on, big-bang assault. Instead rights are being sliced away bit by bit. It's a stealth attack – and many haven't noticed.

That is why the TUC and Britain's trade unions are campaigning against the

“There is a strong right-wing lobby within the government that opposes rights at work. They have opposed every advance for working people – the minimum wage, paid holidays and protection for agency workers.”

work. They have opposed every advance for working people – the minimum wage, paid holidays and protection for agency workers.

They think they can use the economic crash as an excuse to roll back rights at work. They say that cutting rights will help the economy grow – but history and other countries show that simply isn't true.

And while some business organisations always cheer on attacks on employee rights, others oppose them or say that employment rights are not what is holding back company growth.

This is a campaign we can win. The coalition is split on many of these issues. The vast majority of the public is with us.

Read on to find out about the threats, what you can do to help fight them and why the moves are not just unfair, but bad economics. **R&W**



changes. We need to make people aware of what they might lose. And make sure ministers know that we have rumbled them.

There is a strong right-wing lobby within the government that opposes rights at

i Employment rights that are under threat

- abolition of unfair dismissal protection, whether for micro businesses only or for all employees
- moving Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) from employer-administered to state-administered
- reduction in statutory maternity leave
- substantial changes to employment tribunals, including the introduction of fees
- substantial changes to the law on industrial action, including introducing a minimum voting threshold
- reduction in consultation periods for collective redundancy
- abolition of the statutory union recognition scheme.



Are your rights really a problem for your boss?

Some business groups lead the call to scrap rights at work. But when you ask real businesses about the problems they face, they hardly mention employment rights.

The Small Business Barometer commissioned by the Department for Business (BIS) asked 500 small and medium-sized businesses about their main obstacles to success. The biggest faced by nearly half was the state of the economy. Next came getting banks to lend. And regulation came at the end after taxation, cash flow and competition. Only six per cent said regulation was their main barrier to growth.

Sensible business leaders know that making staff feel insecure does not help the economy. Mike Emmott of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) – the professional body for HR managers – says: “If the government is serious about increasing economic growth, it will look to support employers’ efforts to build an engaged workforce. Taking away employment rights is not the answer and there is no evidence to support such a claim.

“If the government wants high-performing workplaces to increase productivity and support economic growth, it needs to accept that they cannot be built on the back of unfair treatment of employees. Fairness, trust and respect are the basis for successful employment relationships, not dumbing down management practice to the level of the least competent.” **R&W**

Rights can be undermined without changing the law

After a long union campaign new rights for agency workers came into force this year. The new government does not like them, but cannot reverse them as they come from Europe.

These rights mean that after 12 weeks in a placement, agency workers must be given:

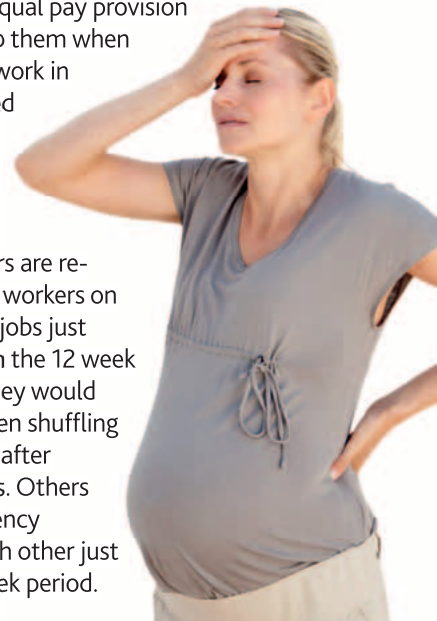
- the same pay as a permanent worker doing the same job
- equal treatment on other issues including working time and holidays
- the right to apply for permanent jobs in the company that are advertised internally.

But employers are using loopholes to get round these rights and the government is doing nothing to stop this.

If the agency employs the agency worker directly, so that they become the employee of the agency, they are no longer legally an agency worker and the equal pay provision does not apply to them when they are sent to work in a company owned by someone else (that’s the naughty Swedish derogation!).

Some employers are re-engaging agency workers on slightly different jobs just before they reach the 12 week point at which they would get equal pay, then shuffling them back again after another 12 weeks. Others are swapping agency workers with each other just before the 12 week period.

R&W



i Will Vince Cable stand his ground?



Vince Cable is the Secretary of State for Business and is the member of the Cabinet responsible for most employment rights issues. He has regularly spoken out against the plans of his Conservative coalition partners.

He told *The Guardian* in March 2012:

“I am going to confront the old-fashioned negative thinking which says that all government needs to do to generate growth is cut worker and environmental protections, cut taxes on the rich and stroke ‘fat cats’ until they purr with pleasure. I’m completely repudiating the idea that government has to get

out of the way. Government has a positive role to play.”

And writing in *The Sun* on the day that the Beecroft report was published (21 May 2012) he said:

“Some people think that if labour rights were stripped down, employers would start hiring and the economy would soar again. This is complete nonsense. British workers are an asset, not just a cost. I am opposed to the ideological zealots who want firms to fire at will.”

“I talk to big and small businesses every day, and none of them tell me that their biggest obstacle to growth is troublesome workers who they can’t get rid of.”

The Beecroft report

As published in the Daily Mirror



Many of the attacks on workplace rights come from a report that the government refused to publish for many months. It was drawn up by venture capitalist Adrian Beecroft, who has donated more than half a million pounds to the Conservative Party since David Cameron became its leader.

Beecroft is a multi-millionaire and chairs Dawn Capital. This venture capital company owns Wonga.com, the controversial payday lender. It charges an APR of 4,214 per cent on its loans.

His report calls for many employment rights to be torn up. He even wants the Gangmasters' Licensing Authority

abolished. This was brought in after 21 Chinese cockle pickers were drowned in Morecambe Bay and designed to protect vulnerable workers in the worst industries.

Beecroft admits, "some people would be dismissed simply because their employer did not like them. While this is sad I believe it is a price worth paying."

He wants to strip away many employment rights from employees of small firms employing fewer than ten people.

It goes too far for many Liberal Democrats. Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg said that it would have "a chilling effect" on the labour market.

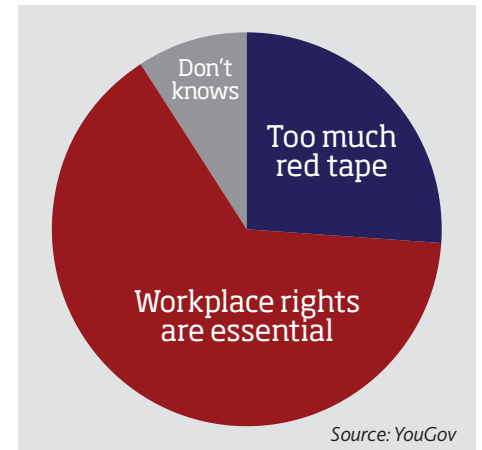
Norman Lamb MP, who is now the minister responsible for workplace rights, but was Clegg's chief of staff when the report leaked into the press, said that it would be "madness" to throw away workers' protections against unjustified sackings. "It is likely to have the unintended consequence of destabilising consumer confidence at a very difficult time. If every employee in the land faced the prospect that they could be removed arbitrarily, the destabilising effect could be devastating. It would legitimise Victorian employment practices." **R&W**

"The government's ideological attack on employee rights is nothing short of a rogue's charter. It is quite clear that the business secretary is losing the argument with the Beecroft supporters in No. 10 and this could have immeasurable consequences for employees in this country."

Ian Murray MP, March 2012

Voters and business – what do they think?

Voters reject the government's argument according to a YouGov poll of 1,700 people in November 2011.



Thinking about workplace rights such as protections against unfair dismissal, rights to maternity and paternity leave and minimum wage legislation, which of the following approaches do you think is the best for economic growth?

- Businesses have to deal with too much red tape on workers' employment rights. Workplace rights sound nice, but in the end mean fewer jobs and a weaker economy. Companies should have more freedom to hire and fire workers as they see fit: **26 per cent**
- Workplace rights are essential and don't mean fewer jobs in well-run companies. Businesses will be more successful in the long run if they involve their employees more in major decisions, and if the workforce feels secure and motivated: **64 per cent**

i Bosses oppose rights restrictions

Peter Prater is Managing Director of QTAC Payroll Products, a Bristol-based company specialising in the production of payroll services. Established in 1994, the company employs 18 permanent staff and four temporary workers.

Peter is against the government's changes to employment rights. He says: "We've got the balance on

employment regulation just right at the moment. The changes that the government introduced in April won't make a scrap of difference to small businesses like ours.

"Small businesses want to treat their staff decently and operate honestly. There is no need to change unfair dismissal law. Providing you follow the

process correctly, you can get rid of unsuitable workers fairly – I've never had a dismissal case go to an employment tribunal in 18 years.

"The government should leave employment law alone and tackle more important issues – like getting the banks to lend. There are signs that they are beginning to do this, but there's still a long way to go."



Unfair dismissal: wait longer and rights go in small firms

The government has cut unfair dismissal rights. From Friday 6 April 2012 the qualifying period for unfair dismissal increased from one to two years, meaning you are now unable to claim unfair dismissal until you have worked for your employer for two years. You can be sacked 23 months into a job with minimal notice, no explanation and no employment compensation.

Under the new law, if you change job during those two years the clock goes back to zero and you must wait another 24 months until you are protected. If you are on a fixed-term contract that lasts just under

"Under the new law, if you change job during those two years the clock goes back to zero and you must wait another 24 months until you are protected."

two years and your contract is then renewed, the qualifying period is re-set to start from the date of the new contract. Bad employers will make more use of fixed-term contracts to avoid giving their staff protection.

History shows that making people wait longer for unfair dismissal protection has no effect on unemployment. The Conservatives made the wait longer in 1980, but unemployment soared. When it was subsequently reduced by Labour unemployment dropped.

The government is consulting on whether to scrap unfair dismissal law completely for businesses with 10 or fewer employees. Vince Cable says he's against, while George Osborne has encouraged employers to lobby him.

Ending unfair dismissal rights would mean that your boss could sack you on a whim, however many years of loyal service you have given. Instead Conservatives want "compensated no fault dismissal".

That means you would get a small, fixed sum of money as compensation, and not even a right to a reference. **R&W**

Changes to unfair dismissal mean that as many as 2.7 million employees – the number of people working on short-term contracts across the UK – could lose out on unfair dismissal rights, with women, black, Asian and younger employees likely to be hit especially hard as they are more likely to be on short-term contracts.



TO JOIN THE CAMPAIGN

against these unfair attacks on workplace rights and for more information, visit our website at:

www.stopemploymentwrongs.org.uk

📍 Tyrone fights back



In March 2012 Tyrone Pennell of West Thurrock was awarded more than £28,000 for unfair dismissal at an employment tribunal. Tyrone was dismissed from his job – where he had been working for 15 months – after his lorry got stuck in a hole on a bridge on the way to making a delivery, causing £2,500 worth of damage to his lorry. His employers claimed he had been negligent – saying he had lost his way and failed to follow a ‘red route’ to the location.

Tyrone’s employers did not ascertain all the facts and also refused to follow a correct disciplinary

“Tyrone received reasonable monetary compensation for unfairly losing his job and can say to prospective employers that he was unfairly dismissed and that he had done nothing wrong.”

procedure. In fact he had been given the wrong directions, and the hole in the road had been covered by a thin sheet of aluminium which meant that he had not been able to see the hole from his cab.

Fortunately Tyrone had been working for his employers for more than a year, so he was covered by unfair dismissal law. Had he been forced to rely on the new “compensated no fault dismissal” the government is proposing, all he would probably have got is the equivalent of statutory redundancy compensation which would have been considerably less than the £28,000 he received (£5,160 at the most).

Tyrone received reasonable monetary compensation for unfairly losing his job and can say to prospective employers that he was unfairly dismissed and that he had done nothing wrong. Before this incident his record was unblemished. If this had happened now, Tyrone would have had no come-back as he hadn’t been in his job for two years and would have been left unemployed with no reference.

Sacking staff is already easy



It’s a myth that employers cannot make redundancies when times are hard or sack poorly performing workers.

The clue is in the name: “unfair dismissal”. Employers can get rid of staff who cannot do their job or break rules as long as they follow simple procedures. Staff in their jobs for less than two years already have no protection against unfair dismissal, except in very special circumstances.

The two main grounds for fair dismissal are conduct, such as dishonesty or continuing lateness, and capability, where a worker cannot do their job properly.

Nor is an unfair dismissal claim a route to riches. Most awards made by tribunals in 2011 were less than £4,500. One in four was less than £2,000.

The Beecroft report also calls for the return of a statutory retirement age, which would allow employers to get rid of staff when they reached retirement even if they wanted to carry on working and can do their jobs. Yet it was the coalition government that abolished statutory retirement. **R&W**

Research conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows no link between employment regulation and whether business can expand. The real pressure for employment deregulation is political not economic.

Busting the tribunal myths

The government claims that rising numbers of tribunal cases make change necessary.

Employment tribunal cases have gone up only because the vast majority of claims involve large groups of workers taking the same equal pay or working time issues.

Most multiple claims are based on basic European rights such as equal pay, and the government has no power to weaken these rights (though they could improve the procedures).

Single claims where individual workers raise complaints about their own treatment have remained fairly steady as the graph (below) shows. Indeed the number of single claims fell by 15 per cent between 2010 and 2011. Sixty thousand individual cases a year out of a workforce of 26 million is not excessive.



The government wants to introduce fees for workers wanting to take a workplace dispute to an employment tribunal. Even with the introduction of the government's 'remission' scheme – which will make some of the lowest paid exempt from the proposed costs – many low paid workers will be priced out of justice. There is almost no legal aid available for advice on employment law.

Many of those who take tribunal cases are vulnerable workers facing real exploitation who are not in unionised workplaces or able to afford a lawyer. Charging them a fee to take a case will deter many, and make it easier for the minority of really bad bosses to bully and mistreat their staff.

The proposed systems are so complex they will also deter claims. Tribunals are meant to be informal and accessible, yet the new procedure means that people have to understand how compensation is calculated so they can make the right monetary claim. **R&W**

Proposed tribunal fees have been set very high to deter claims. To recover unpaid wages or holiday pay from your employer, you will need to pay upfront fees of either £200 or £400 – which could easily be more than the sum claimed. Small change for MPs perhaps, but a lot of money for many.

Jenny wins her claim



21-year-old Jenny King* graduated from Birmingham University in Summer 2011, and she began working at a restaurant in the city centre while looking for a job in her chosen field.

While Jenny was working there the ownership of the restaurant changed hands. The initial owners failed to pay Jenny for some of the shifts that she had worked and she had received no holiday pay. Jenny was owed around £450 in total and wanted to claim the back pay she was entitled to. A formal letter and a request for a grievance hearing did not resolve the issues, so Jenny submitted a tribunal claim citing both her latest and initial employers at the restaurant as respondents. After some denial the latest employer offered to settle the claim for £350 just before the case was due to be heard. Jenny accepted.

Jenny told the TUC: "Had the fees for employment tribunals which the government is proposing been in place last December when I was taking my old employers to tribunal, there is no doubt that I would not have been able to submit the claim. The proposed court costs would have been at least on a par with – if not higher than – my claim and therefore an obvious deterrent.

"The proposed charging system will discourage genuine claimants, and new workers and the low paid will be at a clear disadvantage when considering their options if they are treated unlawfully. Even as the system is, several of my former colleagues had the same experience as me but left without pursuing what was owed to them.

"I'm concerned that a new regime will only encourage more bad practices by employers – if people can't afford to take claims to court, what is to stop rogue bosses from mistreating their staff at work?"

* Identifying details have been changed to protect the individual concerned.



Threats to maternity pay

Maternity rights are under attack. Ministers are considering reducing statutory maternity pay (SMP), length of time off and giving families a one-off lump sum payment when the baby arrives instead of paying the mother directly through her employer's payroll system throughout her time off work.

Business groups want maternity pay systems changed. At present employers pay it, but claim it back from the state. They want it to become a state-administered benefit.

This would be bad news for mothers:

- It would cut them off from their workplace.
- It breaks the link with the extra maternity pay that good employers pay and makes it less likely that employers will top up the legal minimum.
- It is likely to be means-tested
- It will make it harder for families on low

“Evidence shows that stopping breastfeeding frequently coincides with the mother's return to work, particularly as very few mothers have access to proper breaks and facilities.”

- incomes to budget.
- It will put pressure on less well-off mothers to go back to work as early as possible, rather than taking time to bond with their baby. Reducing maternity leave to 18 weeks is just as bad.
- It gives the message that this is the

normal period of leave needed for women to prepare and recover from childbirth and to bond and care for a newborn baby.

- Under the government's proposals, a woman would be able to take shared parental leave once their maternity leave ends, but there is an increased risk that women will be pressured to return to work early by their employer or a partner if 18 weeks is seen as the 'norm' for maternity, particularly if there is a lack of job security or the family has financial worries.
- An 18-week maternity period also does not fit with Department of Health (DOH) and World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations that babies should be exclusively breast-fed for the first 26 weeks. Evidence shows that stopping breastfeeding frequently coincides with the mother's return to

Kate needs her maternity pay



Kate Newton, a 26-year-old youth worker from Pembrokeshire in Wales, had her first child in October 2011. Kate received six weeks maternity pay at 90 per cent of her salary from the charity where she works, and then got the basic statutory maternity allowance of £523 a month.

Kate and her partner really struggled to make ends meet while she was on

maternity leave and Kate started going back into work for 'keeping in touch days' from two months after her daughter's birth, just to get the extra bit of cash she received for this to help pay the bills.


Kate was the major breadwinner and she found lack of money a constant pressure while she was off work. She couldn't afford many of the things she would have

liked to get for her baby and the money worries were an added strain for the family in the first few months when Kate was also dealing with the baby blues.

After four months, Kate had no choice but to return to work – a gas and electric bill had come in during December and Kate had to defer paying it until January, when she was working again.

Kate said: "I didn't want to go back to work so soon after my daughter's birth, but the money situation was awful. We couldn't have survived on any less. If the government's proposals to cut back maternity pay had been in place, we wouldn't have been able to start a family. One lump sum up front wouldn't have worked for us either, as we would have ended up using it for the bills – like the gas and electric – that came in and then we would have had nothing left further down the line.

"Ideally I'd have liked to take 9–12 months off to raise my daughter but we didn't have a choice. It's difficult because even now things like the mums group and swimming classes for babies are on a weekday, when I'm now back at work so we can't go along and we're both missing out on those activities and support."

 *The 'Valuing Maternity' campaign will bring together campaign groups to oppose plans to reduce maternity leave below 26 weeks – and highlight problems faced by pregnant women and new mothers during the economic downturn. Watch out for the launch.*

work, particularly as very few mothers have access to proper breaks and facilities in the workplace to allow them to express milk.

- Nine out of ten mothers take 26 weeks or more maternity leave, and the average is 39 weeks. The same government survey shows that many employers already try to stop women taking their legal right to a year's leave, particularly in lower level jobs where a majority believed their employer did not allow a full year's leave. **R&W**

Nicola couldn't cope

33-year-old Nicola Alloway is from Cumbria and has three children; her youngest was born in 2010. When Nicola had her two elder daughters, she had to return to work after a few months for financial reasons. After the birth of her youngest child in 2010, she was off for 15 months as she was suffering from symphysis pubis dysfunction (SPD). When she returned to work she was still suffering from SPD and was restricted in her work.

Nicola said: "If statutory maternity pay had been cut back to 18 weeks as the government proposes, I would have really struggled. I work in a very stressful environment and four months after the birth of my youngest I was hardly able to walk due to SPD.

"Any reductions in statutory pay would have affected me having more children. If changes are introduced, I would expect women to have to choose between returning to work or raising a family – and not being able to combine both – as the cost and lack of child care for a tiny baby would be so prohibitive."





Scrapping rights does nothing for jobs

Those who attack employment rights say that they hold back the economy, destroy jobs and stop growth. But they say that every time people at work get a better deal – just as their predecessors opposed nineteenth-century laws to outlaw child chimney sweeps. They said the minimum wage would destroy millions of jobs. But it did not – and no mainstream politician now dares oppose it.

Employment rose after the UK introduced the minimum wage, new trade union rights and guaranteed holidays under the last government. Over the years before the recession our economy created millions

of new jobs. And in early 2010, before the economy slumped again, employment surged. The high levels of unemployment

“Scrapping rights at work will make economic recovery harder. The more people fear for their jobs, the less likely they are to spend. And that makes companies reluctant to invest. Instead of growth you get a vicious circle of economic decline.”

we have today weren't caused by giving people better employment rights, they are the result of the sharpest economic slowdown since the Great Depression. The worldwide economic crash was caused by not enough regulation – not too much. Yet just as Adrian Beecroft now calls for employment deregulation, Conservative policy groups were calling for further deregulation of mortgages just before the sub-prime crisis triggered the near-collapse of the world's banks.

And easy fire – in the hope of easy hire – does not help the economy. Instead it makes the economy unstable. If at the first sign of a downturn employers start sacking people, it makes an economic crisis more likely. The newly unemployed will stop spending and even those who still have jobs will batten down the hatches.

This is not just a union view. Here's John Philpott, the Chief Economist of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, the organisation for those directly responsible for employing people: “The vast weight of evidence on the effects of employment protection legislation suggests that while less job protection encourages increased hiring during economic recoveries it also results in increased firing during downturns. The overall effect is thus simply to make employment less stable over the economic cycle, with little significant impact one

The argument for scrapping rights goes that if you make it easy to fire, employers will be quick to hire. But neither argument stacks up. Workers in the UK already have worse rights than in many other countries. The OECD international organisation says that out of the world's 36 richest countries the UK has the second worst level of employee protection. Only the US comes below us. Yet other countries are recovering from recession far more quickly than in the UK – in Germany (where workers have far more rights at work) unemployment is already lower than it was before the downturn.

way or the other on structural rates of employment or unemployment.

"There is no evidence that UK employment suffered significantly in the 1970s as a result of the introduction in 1975 of a six-month qualifying period for rights against unfair dismissal or that there was any substantial benefit when the qualifying period was subsequently raised to two years in the 1980s before being lowered to one year in 1999."

And while business organisations never lose an opportunity to attack rights at work, when their members are asked what the problems facing their businesses are they put many factors much higher than regulation. The most recent Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) *Small Business Monitor* found only six per cent of small or medium businesses saying regulation was a big barrier to growth. Far more are worried about our lack of economic growth – they know that it's not until our recovery strengthens that we will be able to create more jobs.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) *Access to Finance* includes information on 'limiting factors for business growth'. The 'general economic outlook', 'price competition', 'limited demand in domestic markets' and the 'high cost of labour' were all substantially more likely to be listed by businesses than the 'regulatory framework.'

Scrapping rights at work will make economic recovery harder. The more people fear for their jobs, the less likely they are to spend. And that makes companies reluctant to invest. Instead of growth you get a vicious circle of economic decline. Norman Lamb MP (pictured below), before he became the minister responsible for these issues, was right to dismiss the Beecroft report by saying: "It is likely to have the



© Press Association Images



YOU'D THINK THE GOVERNMENT HAD BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN ATTACK YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK.

IT'S NOT AS IF THIS COUNTRY was exactly short of issues. We face urgent problems like a stricken economy, record youth unemployment and the gap between the super-rich and everyone else.

Yet the government is devoting precious time and energy to attack, of all things, rights at work. A stealthy series of changes that add up to a wholesale assault.

Already an extra year to wait for protection against unfair sackings, with reduced maternity rights and more dangerous workplaces in the pipeline.

These sly attacks have nothing to do with getting the economy moving. They come from the same people who fought the minimum wage and paid holidays.

By slicing away a bit at a time, they hope no-one will notice. But we have, and you should too.

Visit the website to find out more, and tell ministers they've been rumbled.



VISIT
WWW.STOPEMPLOYMENTWRONGS.ORG.UK
TO FIND OUT MORE



"It is likely to have the unintended consequence of destabilising consumer confidence at a very difficult time. If every employee in the land faced the prospect that they could be removed arbitrarily, the destabilising effect could be devastating." Norman Lamb MP

unintended consequence of destabilising consumer confidence at a very difficult time. If every employee in the land faced the prospect that they could be removed arbitrarily, the destabilising effect could be devastating."

And even Michael Heseltine agrees: "When you start talking about enabling people to sack people, well, I have two observations. The first is this, the sort of

companies that I understand don't sit there saying, 'by golly, we've got to be able to get rid of people, so therefore we mustn't invest because the risks are too high.' If you're really an enterprising business, you invest because you think it's going to be a success. You may have to readjust but you can do that, as quite obviously is happening right through industry as significant numbers of people are being laid off." **R&W**

Why we need the rights campaign



© Trades Union Congress

Brendan Barber, TUC General Secretary

Employee rights enjoy wide support. Policies for better maternity rights, guaranteed paid holidays and the national minimum wage were some of the last government's most popular reforms. Parts of the press may enjoy having a go at some things done in the name of health and safety, but the vast majority realise that workplaces can be dangerous and workers need proper protection.

But there has always been a hard-core fringe of people who oppose work rights. They go against the pure free market creed that sees any regulation – even those designed to keep your workforce alive – as red tape and burdens on business.

This is not an approach that wins elections. Remember how David Cameron dropped his party's opposition to the minimum wage as a symbol that his party had changed. Nothing in the Beecroft report featured in party manifestos. Instead we were promised more family-friendly workplaces.

But the UK's nasty party thinks it can use the economic crash as an excuse for attacking the rights they hate. Everyone is desperate for economic growth, and

"We want everyone who wants to defend decency at work to sign up not just to our petition but to keep in touch so we can alert as many as possible when each new threat appears and get maximum support for future campaign initiatives."

their argument that work rights stand in the way of new jobs has growing support in government – even though there is no evidence to back up this claim. Indeed people frightened of losing their jobs are less likely to spend, and without willing customers companies will not invest.

Already new workers have to wait two years before they get protection from unfair dismissal. Maternity rights are under threat. Staff in small businesses risk becoming second class citizens at work – losing rights overnight if an organisation goes from 11 to 10 staff.

While some business groups cheer these, sensible employers understand that they

have nothing to fear from fair treatment at work as that's how you get the best from your staff. Some coalition ministers – but probably a minority – agree.

But our enemies are clever. They are not calling for a bonfire of rights, but trying to slice them away bit by bit hoping that few will notice.

That is why we need this campaign. We want everyone who wants to defend decency at work to sign up not just to our petition but to keep in touch so we can alert as many as possible when each new threat appears and get maximum support for future campaign initiatives.

So show your support:

- Sign up at www.stopemploymentwrongs.org.uk
- Spread the word on Facebook and Twitter.
- Ask for further copies of this campaign magazine for your workplace.
- Keep in touch with your own union's campaign.

**EMPLOYEE RIGHTS
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www.stopemploymentwrongs.org.uk