

# United Campaign

*to Repeal the Anti Trade Union Laws*

**FOR TRADE UNION FREEDOM**

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## \*\*\*\*\*media release\*\*\*\*\*

October 18, 2007

### **Trade unionists bring rights campaign to parliament today 'Shackled' workers to highlight call for Trade Union Freedom Bill**

HUNDREDS OF trade unionists from across Britain will converge on parliament from **16:00 TODAY (Thursday, October 18)** to call for support for fair trade-union laws that allow workers the freedom to fight inequality and poverty.

**Workers in uniform from many industries and services will appear in chains at Old Palace Yard opposite the House of Commons at 16:00, to highlight that working people in Britain are constrained by Europe's most repressive anti-union laws.**

They will be joined by MPs and union leaders calling for support for the **Trade Union Rights and Freedom Bill**, which would remove some of the most punitive and bureaucratic restrictions imposed by successive raft of anti-union laws.

**The demonstration, called by the United Campaign to Repeal the Anti-Union Laws will be followed by a rally in Committee Room 14 in the House of Commons from 17:30 – full list of speakers below.**

**The bill, introduced by John McDonnell MP, is scheduled to have its second reading on Friday (October 19) – see notes below.**

"This bill offers the ideal opportunity to re-establish basic civil liberties for trade unionists in this country, and I urge the government not to miss this chance," **John McDonnell** said ahead of the rally.

“It's high time the government's enthusiasm for less regulation was applied to trade-union law,” said **Sarah Veale, head of equality and employment rights at the TUC.**

“If we have a government that is listening and learning it should acknowledge the growing support for a bill that will right some of the massive wrongs that have undermined collective bargaining,” said **STUC president Phil McGarry.**

“Last week's injunction against the postal workers' strike underlines how the law is brought into disrepute when it denies thousands of workers the freedom to defend their jobs thanks to an inconsequential balloting technicality,” said **leading labour lawyer John Hendy QC.**

“Nine waves of anti-union laws, all opposed by Labour in opposition, have left working people having to jump through hoops to take industrial action at all, and the time has come to turn the tide,” said **RMT general secretary and United Campaign chair Bob Crow.**

“The Trade Union Rights and Freedom Bill is the least we need to give workers in Britain the rights taken for granted in the rest of Europe. It is time the movement stood up and fought for it,” said **Unite T&G joint general secretary Tony Woodley.**

“Workers covered by a collective agreement are paid nearly 17 per cent more than those who aren't, but the anti-union laws have undermined collective bargaining and inequality is at its highest level for four decades,” said **Carolyn Jones, director of the Institute of Employment Rights.**

“Without the Trade Union Rights and Freedoms Act the ability of unions to protect workers from discrimination, victimisation and exploitation is being seriously compromised,” said **NASUWT assistant general secretary Dr Patrick Roach.**

“The UK's poor trade-union rights have an adverse impact on vulnerable workers in every sector of our economy, worsening exploitation and unfair treatment. This campaign is a step to putting this injustice to rights,” said **Unite Amicus assistant general secretary Gail Cartmail.**

“The Trade Union Freedom Bill seeks to unshackle prison officers to secure a safe and controlled Prison System,” said **Prison Officers' Association general secretary Brian Caton.**

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**For further information**, please contact Derek Kotz on 07939 595 092 or United Campaign director John Usher on 07989 851 446

**Notes to editors** on the Trade Union Rights and Freedom Bill, a full list of rally speakers, Early Day Motion 532 follow

**The Trade Union Rights and Freedom Bill would offer:**

- Better protection for striking workers
- Simpler and fairer industrial action balloting and notice procedures
- Reform of the use of injunctions by employers
- Allowing solidarity action in certain circumstances
- Prevention of the use of replacement labour during strikes
- Trade-union rights for prison officers.

**The full bill can be read at:**

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmbills/032/2007032.pdf>

## **The national parliamentary rally for trade-union freedom, October 18, 2007 – speakers' list**

**John Hendy** QC (chair)

**John McDonnell** MP

**Sarah Veale**, TUC head of equality and employment rights

**Phil McGarry**, STUC president

**Bob Crow**, RMT general secretary, United Campaign Chair

**Tony Woodley**, Unite T&G joint general secretary

**Paul Kenny**, GMB general secretary

**Mark Serwotka**, PCS general secretary

**Matt Wrack**, FBU general secretary

**Brian Caton**, POA general secretary

**Jeremy Dear**, NUJ general secretary

**Keith Ewing**, IER president

**Ian Lavery**, NUM president

**Anita Halpin**, SERTUC vice-president

**Katy Clark** MP

**John Cruddas** MP

**Christine Blower**, NUT deputy general secretary

**Gail Cartmail**, Unite Amicus assistant general secretary

**Patrick Roach**, NASUWT assistant general secretary

**Manuel Cortes**, TSSA assistant general secretary

**Early Day Motion 532 Trade Union Freedom Bill campaign**

Tabled by John McDonnell and signed to date by 125 MPs

That this House recognises that free and independent trade unions are a force for good in UK society around the world and are vital to democracy; welcomes the positive role modern unions play in providing protection for working people and winning fairness at work; notes the 1906 Trades Disputes Act granted unions the legal freedom to take industrial action; regrets that successive anti-union legislation has meant that trade union rights are now weaker than those introduced by the 1906 Trades Disputes Act; therefore welcomes and supports the TUC campaign for a Trade Union Freedom Bill whose principles include better protection for workers, such as those sacked by Gate Gourmet in 2005, the simplification of ballot procedures and to allow limited supportive action, following a ballot, in specific circumstances; and therefore urges the Government to bring forward legislation to address these proposals.

For the current list of signatories, visit:

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=32194&SESSION=885>