

United Campaign

to repeal the anti-trade union laws

media release

April 25, 2002

Union leaders united for a workers' charter

THE LEADERS of ten national trade unions will on Saturday call for a new legal framework of workers' rights to replace anti-union legislation which keeps Britain on the wrong side of international law.

GMB general secretary John Edmonds, Communication Workers' Union leader Billy Hayes, rail workers' leaders Bob Crow and Mick Rix and Fire Brigades Union general secretary Andy Gilchrist will be among those at a rally in central London calling for a Workers' Charter, based on International Labour Organisation and other human-rights conventions.

The event aims to kick-start the campaign, adopted at last year's TUC congress, which will see a series of regional events culminating in a major lobby or parliament later this year demanding repeal of all of the Tory anti-union laws.

"After five years of Labour in office it is long overdue that the reactionary residue of Tory anti-worker laws was swept away," said Aslef general secretary Mick Rix.

"We want a change in the law so that industrial tribunal decisions apply equally to employers and to workers," said Communications Workers Union general secretary Billy Hayes. "As the law stands at the moment, unions cannot ignore ET rulings, yet management are allowed to do so. We want to see employers forced to comply with Employment Tribunal rulings."

"Thirteen million Italian workers had a general strike a couple of weeks ago in protest at proposals to do away with a provision that forces employers to take back employees deemed unfairly dismissed," said John Hendy, QC. "Such a strike would be unlawful in Britain."

"Labour opposed these vicious laws with passion when they were in opposition – and if those laws were wrong then they are just as wrong now," said RMT general secretary Bob Crow.

"I have been a trade unionist all my life, and one of the worst things that happened in this country was Thatcher's anti-union legislation," said actor Tony Booth. "I cannot

be at Saturday's rally but I hope and believe that the labour movement can persuade the Labour government that it must repeal these draconian laws."

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The rally, **United for a Workers' Charter**, will be held at Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London NW1, on Saturday 27 April at 1pm

Speaking will be: Tony Benn; George Brumwell, gen sec UCATT; Brian Caton; gen sec POA; Mick Connolly, reg sec SERTUC; Bob Crow, gen sec RMT; Jeremy Dear, gen sec NUJ; John Edmonds, gen sec GMB, Maria Exall, CWU; Andy Gilchrist, gen sec FBU; Billy Hayes, gen sec CWU; John Haylett, editor, Morning Star; John Hendy QC; Carolyn Jones, director, Institute of Employment Rights; Paul Mackney, gen sec NATFHE; Joe Marino, gen sec BFAWU; Mick Rix, gen sec Aslef; Mark Seddon, editor, Tribune; Bill Speirs, gen sec STUC, and Vic Turner, president, and Shirley Winter, vice-president of the United Campaign.

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