

It is unclear why the trade union bill is necessary. The government has provided no evidence as to why the bill is required, or explained what benefits the bill will bring.

It is also unclear who, among employers and employment professionals, has called for the bill to be introduced. Unlike the 1980s, no-one today has claimed that trade unions are an impediment to the economic performance of the UK.

Work days lost to strike action have dropped by over 90% since the mid-80s<sup>1</sup>. Most unions have good relations with employers because they want the same thing – success. For example, during the economic crisis that began in 2008, unions worked with employers to minimise redundancies.

In addition, the current legislative framework is considered by police as broadly fit for purpose, and the range of criminal offences available to the police sufficient to deal with problems that may arise<sup>2</sup>. If certain aspects of the bill become law then the state will be meddling in the individual relationships between organisations and unions.

### **Unions are important to the economic balance of the UK**

Trade unions, as the largest collective voice of workers, are as important to achieving the government's long-term economic plan as entrepreneurs and businesses. Workers are wealth creators as well.

Thus, it is important that the voice of workers is given equal weight to those of managers and owners. Unions are a conscientious voice in capitalism, making sure that we can all share in growth and are fairly rewarded.

The best route out of poverty is a good job, but nearly six million workers in the UK are paid less than the living wage<sup>3</sup>. Trade unions are the best vehicle through which to improve the salary and conditions of workers.

Government on its own cannot resolve in-work poverty, they can only mitigate the consequences through benefits – something the government is keen to move away from doing, or by raising the minimum wage, but this is a blunt tactic.

The industrial landscape is diverse. Issues around pay and conditions are best resolved at a local level – between workers, their representatives and the employer.

### **Individual business and unions are best placed to decide on the benefits of facility time**

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<sup>1</sup> Days lost to strike action has fallen from seven million days per year in the 80s to an average of 670,00 between 1990 – 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Association of Chief Police Officer's evidence, Carr Review of the Law on Industrial Disputes, Paragraph 5.58

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34691404?ocid=socialflow\\_twitter&ns\\_mchannel=social&ns\\_campaign=bbcnews](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34691404?ocid=socialflow_twitter&ns_mchannel=social&ns_campaign=bbcnews)

Whether to have facility time, or how much facility time, is a decision for individual organisations. The state should have no role in telling these organisations how best to run their affairs. No organisation is forced to offer facility time to the recognised union.

Organisations who offer facility time do it because they benefit from the arrangement. Union officers negotiate with businesses on pay and conditions, help to resolve industrial disputes, and offer advice to workers about learning and improving their skills.

A study by the DTI in 2007 found that: "Workplace representatives bring an identifiable range of benefits worth £476m - £1.1bn, in addition to which there may be significant other gains from increased productivity. The costs to their employers of providing paid time off and facilities ranges between an £407m to £430.4m annually."

The lobbying against facility time has been led by ideological bodies rather than organisations who agree voluntarily to facility time.

### **Individual businesses and unions are best placed to decide how union subs should be paid**

Any agreement for union subscriptions to be deducted at payroll is made between individual organisations and unions. No organisation is forced to do this, and there is no reason why the state should interfere in such agreements. The check-off system of collecting union subscriptions benefits individual members, unions and businesses. It allows businesses to know how many of their employees are members of the union and whether any departments are particularly unionised. Check-off is convenient for individual workers and is used for many other purposes – such as paying back money for a bike loan scheme – as well as collecting union subs.

### **Unions should be able to use modern technology for balloting and opting in/out of the political levy**

At a time when many government departments are adopting a "digital first" approach it is perverse that the trade union bill prevents unions from operating ballots online and to opt in/out of the political levy. If the government wishes for unions to ballot their members more often, and to shorten timeframes for industrial action then they should allow unions to operate in the most efficient way possible.

If an independent body operates the online balloting, and can verify the vote's legitimacy, then unions should be able to e-ballot. Implementing a blanket ban to stop them from doing so feels vindictive.