

FREE OUR UNIONS STATEMENT

We need the right to organise and strike - free our unions

(For a model motion to propose support for this statement, see overleaf)

We need abolition of the anti-trade union laws, which hamstring workers organising and taking action, and their replacement with strong legal workers' rights. Otherwise we are fighting the challenges of low pay, insecurity and lack of rights with our hands tied behind our backs.

We applaud the 2017 Labour Party conference's unanimous call for repeal of not just the 2016 Trade Union Act, but also the "*anti-union laws introduced in the 1980s and 90s*" by the Tories and maintained after 1997; and for a "*strong legal charter of workers' rights*". "*For unions to be effective workers need an effective right to strike*". This builds on the unanimous 2015 decision that the next Labour government should "*legislate for strong rights to unionise, win recognition and collective bargaining, strike, picket and take solidarity action*".

We will campaign for:

- Complete and speedy repeal of all anti-union laws.
- Strong legal rights for workers to join, recruit to and be represented by a union; strike/take industrial action by a process, at a time and for demands of their own choosing, including in solidarity with any other workers and for broader social and political goals; and picket freely.
- The right to reinstatement for workers found to have been sacked unfairly. A complete ban on dismissal for industrial action, however long it lasts. Full rights from day one of a job.
- Strong rights for unions to access workplaces, win recognition, and establish collective bargaining, including sector-wide bargaining.
- Unions' right to decide their own policies and activities, determine their own structures and rules, and spend their funds as they choose, free from state and employer interference, in line with ILO Conventions and the European Convention on Human Rights.

For the statement online and a full list of signatories, see bit.ly/2IgQELv

MODEL/ADAPTABLE MOTION FOR UNION ORGANISATIONS TO PROPOSE SUPPORT FOR STATEMENT/CAMPAIGN

Notes

1. The increasing number of trade union struggles scuppered by the anti-trade union laws, including recent national ballots over pay by PCS and UCU.
2. That the anti-union laws – not just the 2016 Trade Union Act, but multiple laws going back to 1980 – continually undermine workers' ability to organise and campaign. They mean our movement is fighting challenges of low pay, insecurity and lack of rights with our hands tied behind our backs.

Further notes

1. That Labour Party conference 2017 conference voted unanimously to “repeal the Trade Union Act, but also anti-union laws introduced in the 1980s and 90s”. Labour conference 2015 voted unanimously for the introduction of strong workers' rights including “strong rights to... strike, picket and take solidarity action”. The 2018 conference voted for the next Labour government to “abolish anti-union laws”.
2. That these policies have not yet fed through into the party's campaigning. The emphasis on promoting collective bargaining is welcome, but "collective bargaining without the right to strike is collective begging" (Institute of Employment Rights).
3. The Free Our Unions campaign (bit.ly/2KnzexG) and statement (bit.ly/2IgQELv) endorsing and elaborating the Labour conference policy and calling for it be put into action – initiated by Lambeth Unison and *The Clarion* and now supported by union organisations across the country, including the national unions FBU, RMT and IWGB.

Resolves

1. To sign the Free Our Unions statement and support the campaign.
2. To circulate the statement, this motion and information about the campaign and its importance, with links, etc, to members.
3. To invite a speaker from the campaign.
4. To buy copies of the *Free Our Unions* pamphlet (bit.ly/2pihiM1) to distribute.
5. To circulate the statement as widely as possible to other branches and sections of the union, and to nearby branches, trades councils [and, as appropriate, Labour Parties], etc, asking for support.
6. To organise a photo supporting repeal of the anti-union laws and the right to strike at an upcoming meeting.
7. To write to Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell about this.