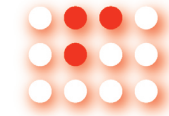


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Widening opposition to Trade Union Bill

As the Tories' *Trade Union Bill* had its second reading in parliament, opposition to it is growing.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady told the 2015 Congress: "History will remember this Conservative government's Trade Union Bill as the biggest attack in 30 years. Not just against trade unions, but against our best chance of raising productivity, pay and demand. Because here is a simple truth: you can't create wealth without the workforce. And you can't spread that wealth around fairly without trade unions.

"If an employer believed we couldn't strike, they wouldn't bother to bargain. We wouldn't have safe workplaces, we wouldn't have paid holidays and we wouldn't have equal pay."

The TUC is organising a national demonstration against the bill and Tories' austerity agenda in Manchester on Sunday 4 October. It will begin with a march through central Manchester, culminating in a rally close to the Conservative Party Conference.

During debate on the bill, Conservative MP David Davis MP said: "I have some sympathy with much of the criticisms of the bill ... I particularly am of-

fended by the idea that a picket organiser needs to give his name to the police. This to me is a serious restriction of freedom of association."

Davis also slated the restricting the actions of unions on social media.

"This proposal strikes me as both impractical, how on earth would it be done? – and asking for judicial trouble," he said. "There will be judicial review if this line is pursued."

Davis said he would vote against the bill at its third reading if these measures were still in the bill.

Vince Cable, the former Liberal Democrat MP and business secretary in the coalition government, said the bill was "vindictive" and had "no evidence base at all".

Government plans in the bill to end the ban on using agency workers to replace striking staff have come under attack.

The trade body, the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC), told the BBC it has real concerns about the move. Kate Shoemith, head of policy at the REC, told the BBC: "We are not convinced that putting agencies and temporary workers into the middle of difficult industrial relations situations is a good idea for agencies, workers or their clients."

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The big recruitment agencies work in countries around the world. Most have signed up to the International Labour Organisation's convention on private employment agencies.

It states that "private employment agencies should not make workers available to a user enterprise to replace workers of that enterprise who are on strike".

The *Financial Times* has also weighed in with criticism. An editorial opened with "Britain does not have a problem with strikes". And it concluded: "In a bill ostensibly about lessening conflict, the government is too eager to pick a fight."

Its editorial described the bill's provisions about union use of social media as "the regulatory equivalent of nailing smoke to the wall".

www.tuc.org.uk/about-tuc/congress/congress-2015/union-issues/tuc-general-secretary-call-government-drop-trade-union

www.tuc.org.uk/events/national-demonstration-conservative-party-conference

www.tuc.org.uk/union-issues/trade-union-bill/campaign-against-trade-union-bill-far-over-says-tuc

www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-34252307

www.ft.com

Jobless total up again

The number of jobless in the UK increased for the third consecutive month.

Unemployment under the Labour Force Survey count edged higher by 10,000 to 1.82 million in the three months to July. The unemployment rate was unchanged at 5.5%.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said: "While it's too soon to say that the labour market is weakening significantly, poor employment and unemployment results for the third month running are worrying."

Women accounted for the rise, as male numbers fell. There was a 23,000 increase in women's unemployment, taking their total to 834,000 and their unemployment rate was up to 5.4% from 5.3%.

The 13,000 decrease in unemployed males took their total below the one million mark to 989,000 and their unemployment rate was down to 5.6% from 5.7%.

The new claimant count includes claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance and those on the means-tested Universal Credit.

In August, unemployment under this new claimant count was 791,700 – a 1,200 increase on the

revised total for July of 790,500. The increase was not enough to impact on the joblessness rate which was remained at 2.3%.

Male claimant numbers were up by 3,100 to 514,600, but their joblessness rate remained at 2.8%. Women claimant numbers were down by 1,900 to 277,100, but their joblessness rate was unchanged at 1.7%.

Unemployment seasonally adjusted				
	Claimants ¹		LFS ³	
	(000s)	% ²	(000s)	%
August 2014	975	2.8	1,972	6.0
September	956	2.8	1,959	6.0
October	935	2.7	1,958	6.0
November	909	2.6	1,914	5.8
December	881	2.6	1,862	5.7
January 2015	846	2.5	1,856	5.7
February	821	2.4	1,838	5.6
March	806	2.3	1,827	5.5
April	798	2.3	1,813	5.5
May	797	2.3	1,853	5.6
June	797	2.3	1,852	5.6
July (r)	791	2.3	1,823	5.5
August (p)	792	2.3		

¹ Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit claimants ² Percentage of working population – the employees, unemployed, self-employed and the armed forces.
³ The Labour Force Survey definition of unemployment – the number of unemployed people who want a job and are ready to start work in two weeks, and have looked for work in the past four weeks. Each figure is the average of the past three months – a rolling average. (p) provisional (r) revised

Regions The LFS unemployment count increased in five of the 12 regions/countries in the three-month period ending July. There were increases of 18,000 in the South East, 12,000 in the East of England and 11,000 in London.

The count was unchanged in three regions/countries – Northern Ireland, Scotland and the South West.

The falls included 21,000 in the West Midlands and 15,000 in Yorkshire and the Humber.

The unemployment rate was above the UK average of 5.5% in seven out of the 12 regions/countries. The highest rates were 8.5% in the North East and 6.5% in Wales.

In August, the new claimant count fell seven of the 12 region/countries. The claimant count rate was above the UK average of 2.3% in seven regions/countries. The highest rates were 4.7% in Northern Ireland and 3.9% in the North East.

Region	August claimants		LFS May – July	
	Number	%	Number	%
North East	46,900	3.9	108,000	8.5
North West	112,600	3.0	195,000	5.5
Yorkshire & the Humber	81,100	3.0	170,000	6.3
East Midlands	48,800	2.1	111,000	4.7
West Midlands	78,400	2.7	156,000	5.7
East of England	49,200	1.6	147,000	4.7
London	112,100	2.0	297,000	6.4
South East	59,600	1.3	206,000	4.5
South West	39,100	1.3	116,000	4.1
Wales	45,200	3.1	99,000	6.5
Scotland	76,700	2.7	164,000	5.9
Northern Ireland	42,000	4.7	54,000	6.2

www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_414231.pdf

www.tuc.org.uk/node/123589

Rebound in average earnings growth

Earnings have seen accelerating growth, according to the latest official figures.

The rise in average weekly earnings for the whole economy was provisionally 3.7% in July against the revised figure of 2.3% for June, according to the Office for National Statistics.

In July, the manufacturing sector posted a rise of 2.2% against a 1.7% rise the previous month. In services, growth rebounded to 3.9% from 2.4% the previous month, while in the private sector as a whole, growth was up to 4.4% from 2.5%.

However, it was a different story for the public sector, excluding financial services, where growth was down to just 0.8% in July from 1.2% in June.

Headline earnings growth (the rolling three-month average) for the whole economy was up to 2.9% in the period ending July from 2.6% in the period ending June.

Manufacturing growth increased to 1.6% from 1.4%, while service sector growth was up to 3.1% from 2.7%. For the private sector as a whole, growth was up to 3.4% against 2.9% the previous month.

For the public sector excluding financial services, growth was down to 1.1% from 1.2%.

£ a week	Average weekly earnings ¹				
	Whole economy	Manufacturing	Services	Private sector	Public sector ²
May 2014 (r)	479	563	464	476	485
June (r)	478	566	464	480	485
July (r)	478	564	462	475	488
August	479	563	464	477	485
September	482	566	466	480	487
October	485	565	469	483	487
November	484	565	469	482	487
December	488	571	473	486	489
January 2015	485	565	471	483	489
February	484	563	470	482	491
March	494	571	478	492	491
April	492	572	476	489	490
May (r)	492	569	478	491	490
June (r)	489	576	475	492	490
July (p)	496	576	481	496	491
% annual change					
Single month	3.7	2.2	3.9	4.4	0.8
3-month average ³	2.9	1.6	3.1	3.4	1.1

¹ Average weekly earnings in Great Britain, seasonally adjusted, including bonuses, but excluding arrears. ² Excludes financial services. ³ Average of the seasonally adjusted data for the latest three months compared with three months a year earlier. (p) provisional (r) revised

The regular pay figures strip out bonuses and also exclude arrears of pay. These show that growth for the whole economy in July was up to 3.2% from 2.8% for each of the previous three months.

The percentage rises in the year to July for various sectors, along with the previous month's rises in brackets, were: manufacturing 2.3% (1.2%); services 3.3% (3.0%); the private sector 3.7% (3.3%); and the public sector, excluding financial services, 1.2% (1.4%).

The average rise for the whole economy for the three-month period ending July was up to 2.9% from 2.8%.

The sectoral increases were: manufacturing 1.6% (1.3%); services 3.1% (3.0%); the private sector 3.4% (3.3%); and the public sector, excluding financial services, 1.3% (1.3%).

The table over is based on the mean average earnings figures published in the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2014. The original figures have been "uprated" by the 3.5% increase in average weekly earnings for the whole economy between April 2014 and July 2015 to give a rough estimate of earnings now.

Full-time average weekly earnings by occupation

	£ a week
All employees	641.90
All male	696.60
All female	558.10
Managers	1,005.40
Professionals	818.90
Associate professionals	694.10
Admin & secretarial	467.00
Skilled/craft	541.50
Services	374.20
Sales	383.90
Operatives	497.80
Other manual jobs	379.50

www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_414231.pdf

RPI inflation edges higher, CPI at 0%

In August, the annual rate of inflation – as measured by the Retail Prices Index (RPI) – was up to 1.1% from 1.0% for each of the previous three months.

Inflation under the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) edged lower and was back down to zero – 0.0% – in August from 0.1% in July, the Office for National Statistics said.

Price inflation

	% increase on a year earlier			
	RPI ¹	RPI	RPIX ²	CPI
August 2014	257.0	2.4	2.5	1.5
September	257.6	2.3	2.3	1.2
October	257.7	2.3	2.4	1.3
November	257.1	2.0	2.0	1.0
December	257.5	1.6	1.7	0.5
January 2015	255.4	1.1	1.2	0.3
February	256.7	1.0	1.0	0.0
March	257.1	0.9	0.9	0.0
April	258.0	0.9	0.9	-0.1
May	258.5	1.0	1.1	0.1
June	258.9	1.0	1.1	0.0
July	258.6	1.0	1.1	0.1
August	259.8	1.1	1.2	0.0

¹ January 1987=100 ² RPI except mortgage interest payments

CPI inflation is still well below the 2% target set by the Treasury for the Bank England's Monetary Policy Committee in its deliberations on interest rates.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said: "Zero inflation is not a route to raising living standards. And with future economic prospects so uncertain, early interest rate rises would bring real risks to households."

Eight of the 14 groups that make up the basket of goods used to calculate the RPI increased by more than the overall rise of 1.1%.

The annual inflation rate for the fares and other travel costs group was 9.6% with "other travel costs", such as air fares up by 9.8%, while bus and coach fares rose by 3.8%.

The clothing and footwear group's rise was 7.9% in August as there was an 11.4% increase in women's clothing, a 7.8% increase in children's clothing and a 6.7% increase in men's clothing.

The housing group's overall increase of 2.5% included a 3.1% in rents.

The food group posted a 2.0% fall. Some staples were down by at least 7.0%, with eggs down by 7.1%, a loaf of bread by 7.4% while fresh milk was down by 7.0%.

There was a 4.4% fall in the fuel and light group on the back of a 31.3% decrease in oil and other fuels and a 4.4% decrease in gas prices.

The motoring group's 4.0% fall included an 11.9% drop in the price of petrol and oil.

More than 1.1%	%	Less than 1.1%	%
Fares etc	9.6	Personal goods & services	0.8
Clothing & footwear	7.9	Alcoholic drink	0.7
Tobacco	5.0	Leisure goods	-1.6
Household services	3.3	Food	-2.0
Housing	2.5	Motoring expenditure	-4.0
Leisure services	2.4	Fuel & light	-4.4
Household goods	2.0		
Catering	1.5		

www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/cpi/consumer-price-indices/august-2015/stb-cpi-august-2015.html

www.tuc.org.uk/economic-issues/zero-inflation-not-enough-secure-living-standards-says-tuc