



# Trade Union Freedoms: Where Next?

**TUC Fringe Meeting**  
**Monday 8 September 2008**  
**5.30pm (or conference end)**  
**Meeting Room 1 (Hall B West),**  
**Brighton Conference Centre**

Against the backdrop of recent hostile decisions in the European Court of Justice, what national and international steps can unions take to promote fair rights and free unions?

**Chair:** John Hendy QC — Chair IER

## **Speakers:**

**Tony Benn** — Vice President United Campaign

**Christine Blower** — Acting General Secretary NUT

**Brian Caton** — General Secretary POA

**Bob Crow** — General Secretary RMT & United Campaign Chair

**Keith Ewing** — President IER

**Derek Simpson** — Joint General Secretary UNITE

**Sarah Veale** — Head of Equality & Employment Rights TUC

**Tony Woodley** — Joint General Secretary UNITE

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In 1997 we were told things can only get better. Nearly 10 years later, Gate Gourmet shone a spotlight on the grotesque restrictions still faced by UK unions. Subsequent calls for a Trade Union Rights and Freedoms Bill struck a popular chord. Yet despite the "mild, modest and moderate" aims of the Bill, it was denied a parliamentary hearing - not once but twice!

So where next for union freedoms? Warwick 2 delivered little progress other than promises of further discussion. At European level, recent decisions of the European Court of Justice in the Viking, Laval, Ruffert and Luxembourg cases represent the most vicious attacks on trade unions since the Taff Vale judgment of 1901.

The Employment Bill, currently going through Parliament, could be amended if the political will existed. But now we also need an effective and coordinated international response to the ECJ assault on trade union rights and collective bargaining.

Speakers at the fringe will consider the political, legal and industrial options available to those wanting to protect trade union freedoms, promote workplace fairness and project a new world order on a discredited and increasingly failing economic system.

**Come to the fringe. Join in the debate. Let your voice be heard.**

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