

The Essential Right To Unionise v. 2025.2(17F)

From pages 1-3 of the full Right To Unionise

‘... as far from an academic handbook on your rights at work as it's possible to imagine, ‘The Right To Unionise’ has the feel of the shop floor’.

North West Labour History

Everyone knows the power business people and public service managers have over people in their economic role as workers. And workers know it's too much. Especially where workers are not unionised, as most aren't. It means most people have to make their living, that most important of things you have to do, in a grossly unequal relationship. It should be unacceptable in national life, in all countries around the world, where workers are the great majority of citizens.

But people don't know how employers get that power and how to challenge it, ideologically and practically. They need to get to grips with exactly how they get it and how it is out of order. And learn how to speak up for their right to respond to it by unionising, in everyday talk across all of society, and in political debate. And, of course, to do it.

The inequality comes from us working in economies dominated by high-volume production - of services as well as manufacturing - where most people have to

get jobs in unfair work relationships. It is the biggest wrong in our economic and political systems. It enables employers to not only treat people unfairly in making their living but also enables the business class, the class that dominates humanity, globally, to corner obscene wealth and political power.

The Right To Unionise uses everyone's common experience of work, and everyday language, to show just how business people, public bodies and other employers get their power over the rest, how it is unfair, how unionising in response is a right and how union conditions should be expected in jobs.

It's an equality issue. Because even where more recognised inequalities are dealt with, inequality in earning a living, shared by people of all colours, nationalities, genders, lifestyles and ages, remains, unless unionised. It is a unifying issue.

But everyone takes employer's power for granted and how they get it isn't well known. Here it is - in our volume-production (industrialised) economies, most of them have many staff. They are stronger than each one of them not because they can get someone else from the unemployed but because, with so many others, they already have someone else. It means they don't have much need for any

one worker and can drive a hard bargain with each of them individually. As they do. (See also Marginal Utility, below).

So job deals you make on your own with employers are unfair. So unfair, in such an important activity as making your living, it is totally wrong. This, the core of the case for the right to unionise, needs making to fellow workers, people generally, the media, and politicians.

It should include this point - businesses are themselves people organized together, collectively. So are public services. They act together, as organizations, all day, every day. Their organisation is recognised in law and, obviously, in workplaces. An argument to make against conservative opposition to unionisation is: you assert business people's right to organise and to act, collectively, in companies and corporations. The rest of the population are entitled to do that too, in their unions.

We can also argue the case in the language of the business class's own free market economics. Marginal utility is a term in business economics for how, when you have lots of something, you have less need for any one. And that puts you in a dominant bargaining position with anyone who wants to sell you another. In high-volume, large-

workforce production, business people use marginal utility on people.

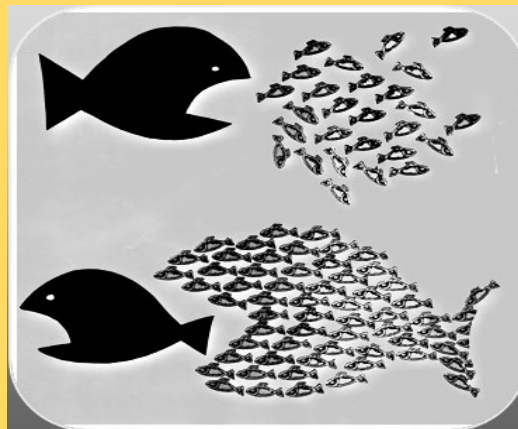
They claim free market relationships are always right and reasonable. In them, employment contract law treats workers as trading with them as equals, which is clearly nonsense. If it is really equal, employers should not be bosses. In this work, we'll look closely at why they are and how we need to unionise to get nearer to actual equal trading with them.

As said, most people not being unionised is the biggest political problem we have because it is how the business and employer minority get power over the majority, workers, and leaves not only earning a living but also the acquisition of wealth, and politics, to be dominated by business people, in their own self-confessedly selfish, private interests.

For society to be fair and equitable, their fellow-citizens, mostly workers, the majority, are entitled to organise too, in unions. Not as a right for 'the unions' but for themselves, jointly. They themselves need to see why they have the right to organize and act together, collectively. People do know they would be stronger unionized but need to be able to make the case clearly to each other and able to make the political case for their entitlement to be. This work aims to help spread widely amongst them the basic understanding of how employers can

mistreat them and how it justifies their own organisation. For union activists and political progressives, it is a resource of observations and arguments to use in conversations and campaigns with workers and to put in political debate at all levels.

The Right To Unionise shows how business people having such power over supposedly 'all-in-it-together' fellow-citizens is wrong. It shows how business people and governments obstructing citizens from organising (as business people do) is unacceptable, how it should be a civil right, a constitutional right. It's time we caught up with the Industrial Revolution: they are organised, we need to be, and are entitled to be.



End of The Essential RTU

Ed McDonnell is a retired lecturer who taught courses for union workplace reps/shop stewards and has been active in the labour movement and class politics for fifty years, in the UK.