

EU-ECB-IMF Imposes Anti-union Law on Greece

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Under instructions from the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the Greek government pushed through the most anti-union legislation in Europe on Monday 15 January.

The move was demanded, along with other draconian measures, as a condition of the latest tranche of what is called Greece's bailout but which in reality is bailing out the European financial institutions which recklessly encouraged Greek borrowing.

The key concession required from the Syriza government was that industrial action would now require a yes vote from more than half of the total number of union members in a workplace, regardless of the actual turnout. This is even worse than the provisions in the Trade Union Act which came into law in the UK in March 2016.

Astonishingly – or perhaps not – there has been not one word about this from the TUC, which continues its scaremongering about the effect of Brexit on workers' rights. While it prattles on, the European Union is turning the screw on the most fundamental of all workers' rights, the right to strike, and using Greece as a test bed for policies it would like to see across all member states.

Without the right to take effective strike action, workers have no protection save the courts, and capitalist courts consistently favour the employers.

The European Court of Justice ruled (in the Laval case, 18 December 2007), that employers have the right to bring workers from a low-wage EU state to a higher-wage EU state on the wages payable in the cheaper country, regardless of any collective bargaining agreements in the higher-wage state. It has also ruled (in the Viking case, 11 December 2007) that effective industrial action to stop outsourcing to cheaper countries is illegal.

In the Alamo-Herron case (18 July 2013), involving Unison members transferred out of local authority employment, it ruled that whatever their contracts said, benefits collectively negotiated for local authority workers could be ignored by their new employers.

"This case is an appalling attack on collective bargaining and is at least as serious as Viking and Laval," wrote [Britain's leading employment barrister](#), John Hendy.

Hendy went on to say,

“The EU has become a disaster for the collective rights of workers and their unions.”

As we have consistently said, strong trade union organisation backed up by effective industrial action if need be is the only way to secure and defend advances in the workplace. The EU murmurs about “rights” while consistently attacking the basis of workplace organisation.

Not one line of the Trade Union Act introduced by the Cameron government, or the even worse White Paper that preceded it, was contrary to EU law. The sooner Britain leaves the EU, the better it will be for trade union members (though some so-called leaders will resent being kicked off the Brussels gravy train). At least then we will just have our own employers to deal with.

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