

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP  
Department of Business, Energy  
and Industrial Strategy,  
1 Victoria Street,  
London,  
SW1H 0NE

27 January 2023

Dear Secretary of State,

**Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill**

We are writing to you as organisations concerned with the protection of civil liberties in this country to urge you to reconsider the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill.

The right to strike is a fundamental liberty.

In Great Britain it is already highly constrained by detailed rules concerning balloting, notice periods and picketing.

We believe the proposals for minimum service levels during industrial action will unfairly constrain the activities of trade unions and their members by allowing a further significant and unjustified intrusion by the state into the freedom of association and assembly.

The government has produced no evidence that such draconian measures are necessary. Voluntary life-and-limb cover has long been a feature of industrial action by essential workers.

This Bill has the potential to cause significant damage to fair and effective industrial relations in this country by making it harder to resolve disputes.

Indeed the government itself has acknowledged that minimum service levels risk leading to an increased frequency of strikes.

We are also concerned by the lack of detail in the Bill, and the enormous scope it gives you and your successors as Secretary of State to decide key provisions, including the minimum service levels themselves, free from proper Parliamentary scrutiny.

In particular, the vast power given to Ministers to amend or revoke primary legislation, including Acts that do not even exist yet, is an extraordinary denial of the duty of our elected representatives to legislate on our behalf.

The Bill will expand the power of Ministers over Parliament and employers over workers, undermine rights protections, and inject uncertainty and precarity into the lives of millions of people who may now face dismissal for going on strike.

We urge you to reconsider these plans for an unwarranted curtailment of freedom of assembly and association.

Yours sincerely,

Martha Spurrier, Director, Liberty

Justine Forster, CEO, Advocacy Focus

Robert Rae, Co-Director, Art27 Scotland

Clive Parry, England Director, Association for Real Change

Dame Sara Llewellyn, Chief Executive, Barrow Cadbury Trust

Silkie Carlo, Director, Big Brother Watch

Rosalind Stevens, Project Manager, Civil Society Alliance

Brian Gormally, Director, Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ)

Isobel Ingham-Barrow, CEO, Community Policy Forum

Megan Thomas, Policy and Research Officer, Disability Wales

Ele Hicks, Engagement, Research, and Policy and Influencing Manager, Diverse Cymru

Andrea Simon, Director, End Violence Against Women Coalition

Clare Moody, Co-CEO, Equally Ours

Kyle Taylor, Founder, Fair Vote UK

Peter Wieltchnig, Policy & Networks Officer, Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX)

Clare Lyons, Director of Policy, Advocacy and Campaigns, Friends of the Earth (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)

Nick Dearden, Director, Global Justice Now

John Gaskell, Chair, Grassroots for Europe

Areeba Hamid & Will McCallum, Co-Executive Directors, Greenpeace UK

Declan Owens, Co-Chair, Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

Kevin Hanratty, Director, Human Rights Consortium Northern Ireland

Mhairi Snowden, Director, Human Rights Consortium Scotland

Yasmine Ahmed, UK Director, Human Rights Watch

Deborah Coles, Executive Director, INQUEST

Zehrah Hasan, Advocacy Director, The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI)

Jess McQuail, Director, Just Fair

Nimrod Ben-Cnaan, Head of Policy and Profile, Law Centres Network

Barry Gale, Group Leader, Mental Health Rights Scotland

Fizza Qureshi, CEO, Migrants' Rights Network

Zara Mohammed, Secretary General, Muslim Council of Britain

Kevin Blowe, Campaigns Coordinator, Netpol

Mark Kieran, CEO, Open Britain

Kate Flannery, Secretary, Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign

Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, Chief Executive, Oxfam GB

Becky Peters, Director (Interim), People's History Museum, Manchester

Police Spies Out Of Lives

Lubia Begum-Rob, Director, Prisoners' Advice Service

Ariane Adam, Legal Director, Public Law Project

Mia Hasenson-Gross, Executive Director, René Cassin, the Jewish Voice for Human Rights

Agnes Tolmie, Chair, The Scottish Women's Convention

Sue Tibballs, Chief Executive, Sheila McKechnie Foundation

Susan Cueva, Chair, Southeast and East Asian Centre (SEEAC)

Chris Jones, Director, Statewatch

Louise Hazan, Co-Founder, Tipping Point UK

Chris Brian, Researcher, Undercover Research Group

Katrina Ffrench, Director, UNJUST C.I.C

Tom Brake, Director, Unlock Democracy

Bob Miller, Secretary, Wearside Amnesty International

Joyce Kallevik, Director, Wish

Raewyn Jones, Interim CEO, Work Rights Centre