

Workers' Rights are Human Rights

EP Expert Briefing

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Workers Rights = Human Rights

“Let there be no doubt: the right to organise, the right to join and form trade unions, the right to collective bargaining, and the right to strike - these are universal human rights.

The right to organise at work is a crucial enabling right, it is the basis on which workers and communities can defend their living standards, protect their health and livelihoods, and defend the public services that the most vulnerable are usually most reliant upon.”

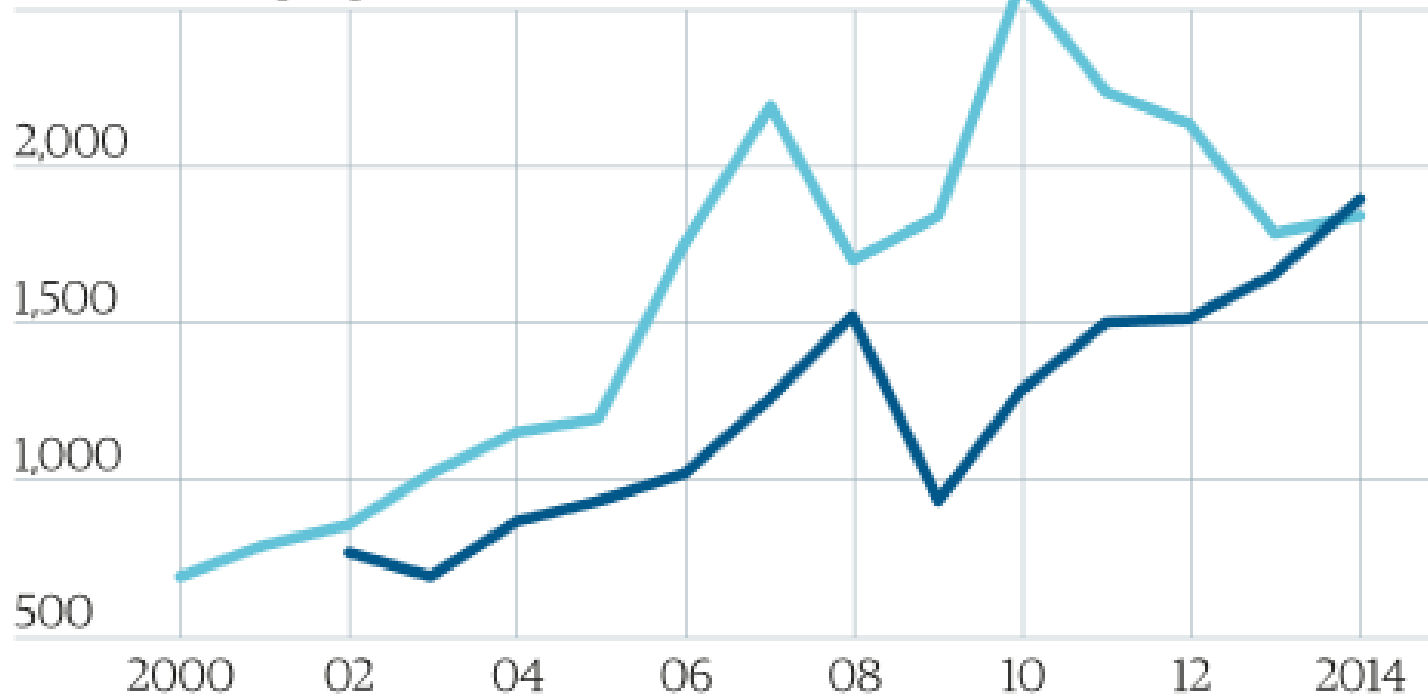
Kate Allen, director AIUK
TUC solidarity rally in support
of USA workers' rights, London April 2011¹

Chart 1: Wealth of 80 richest people

Wealth of the richest 80 people

Combined wealth in current \$bn

● Richest 80 people ● Poorest 50% of world



GUARDIAN GRAPHIC

SOURCE: OXFAM, FORBES

Chart 2: Share of national income of the top 1% 1980 v 2006-2016

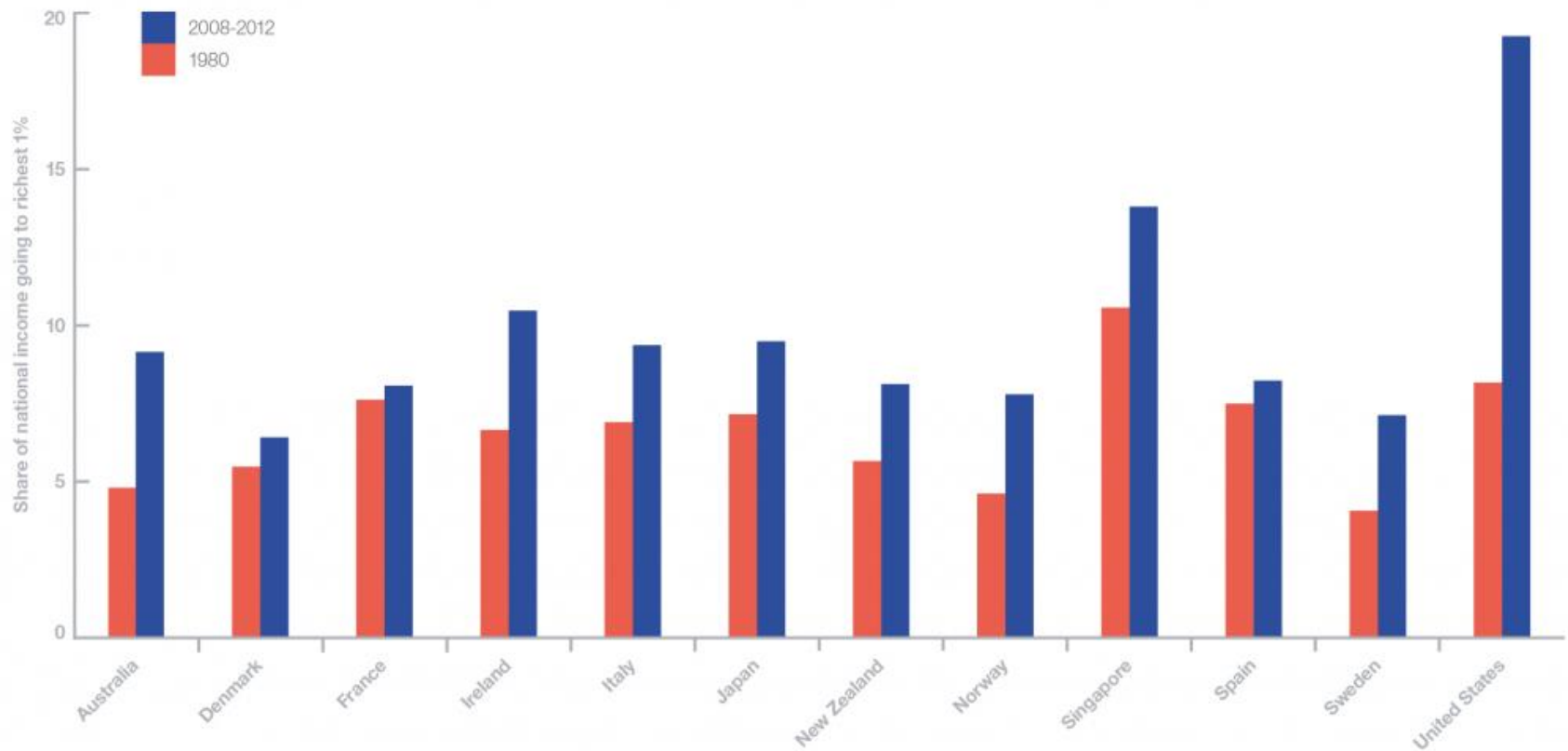


Chart 3: What are the causes?

- Increased financialisation of the public realm
- Accelerating enclosure, privatisation and commodification of the “commons”
- Globalisation/trade policies
- $r > g$ - Picketty
- Austerity policies to finance deficit reductions
- IMF/World Bank conditionalities
- Erosion of workers' rights/workers' power

Chart 4: Hourly compensation v productivity USA 1948-2013

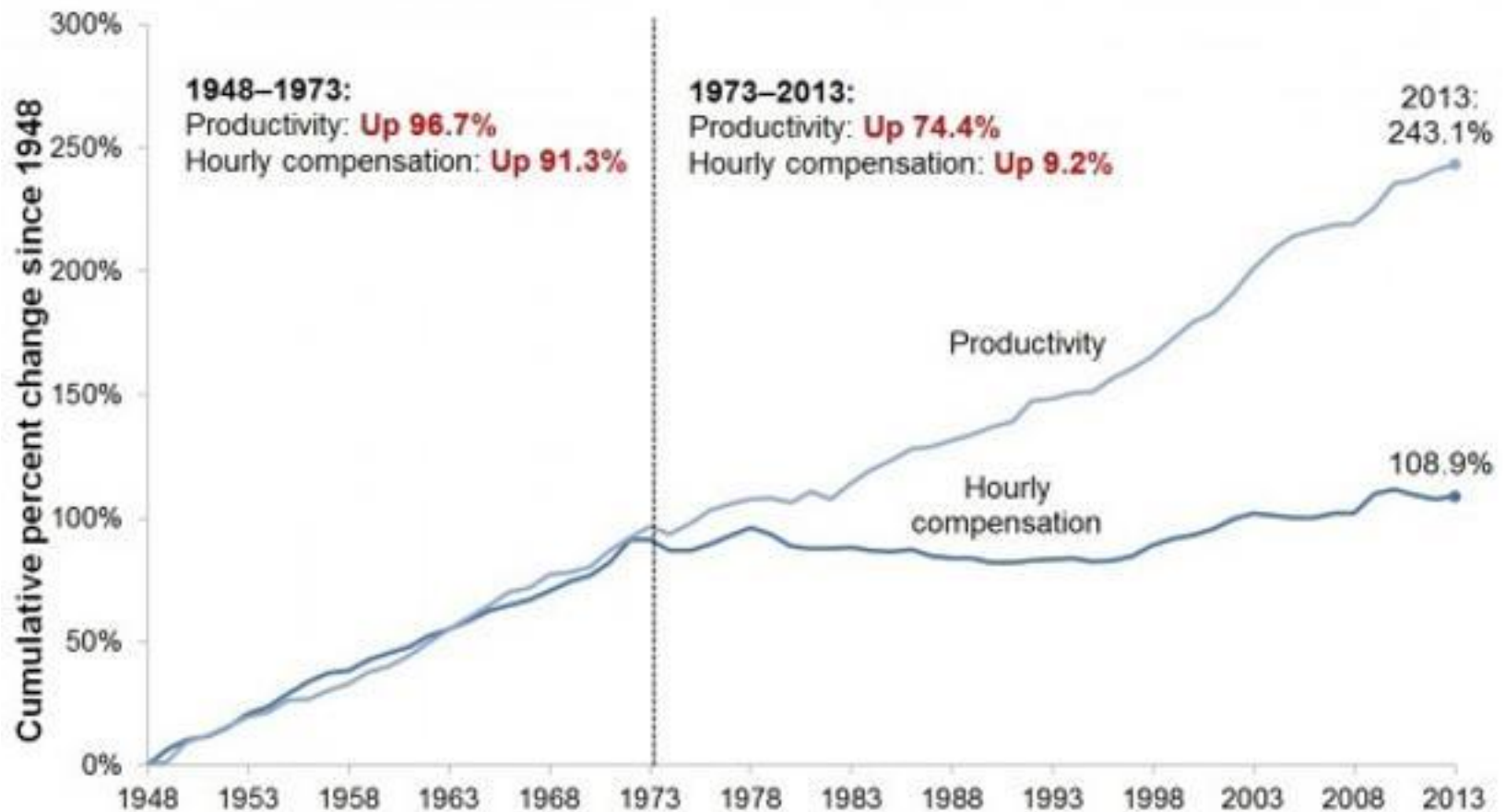
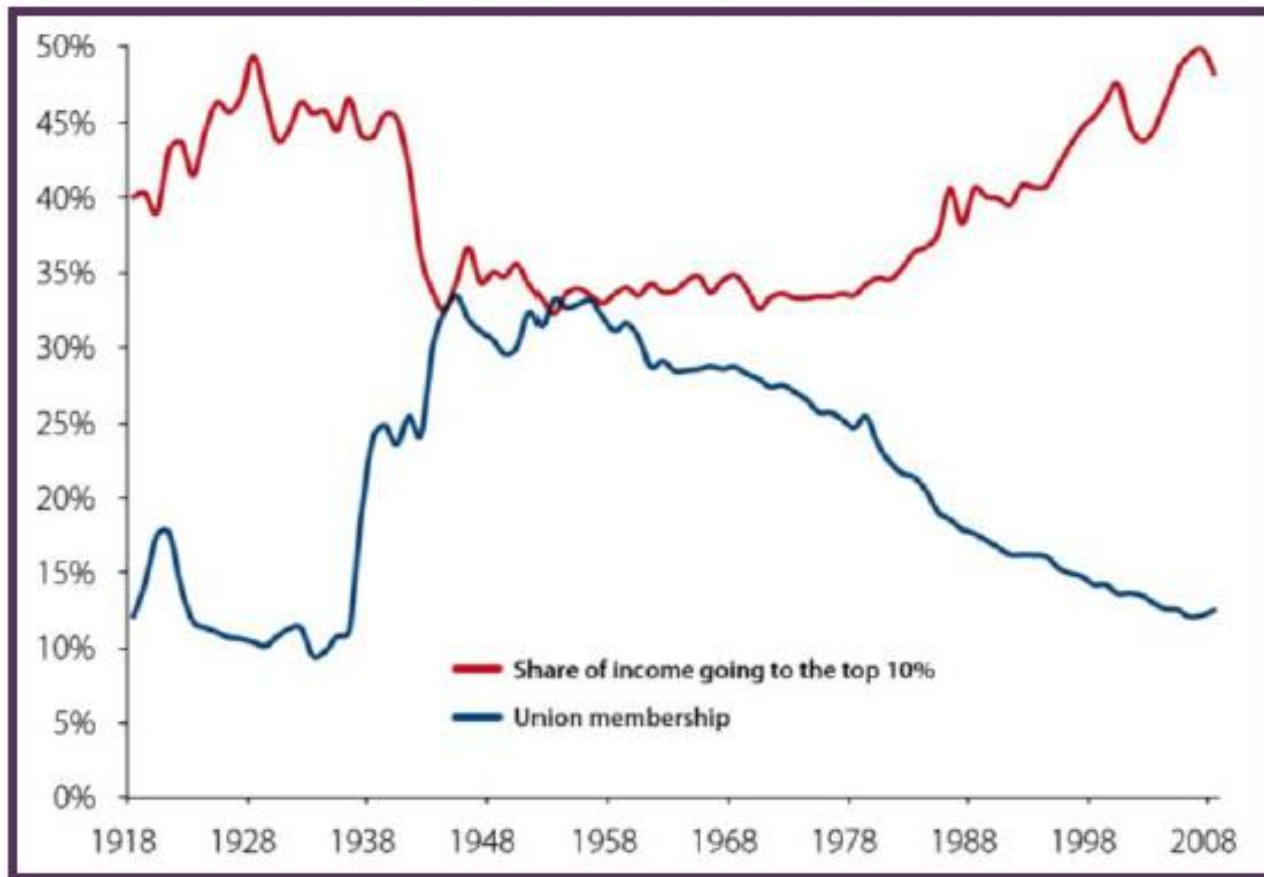


Chart 5: Unions and shared prosperity

USA 1918-2008

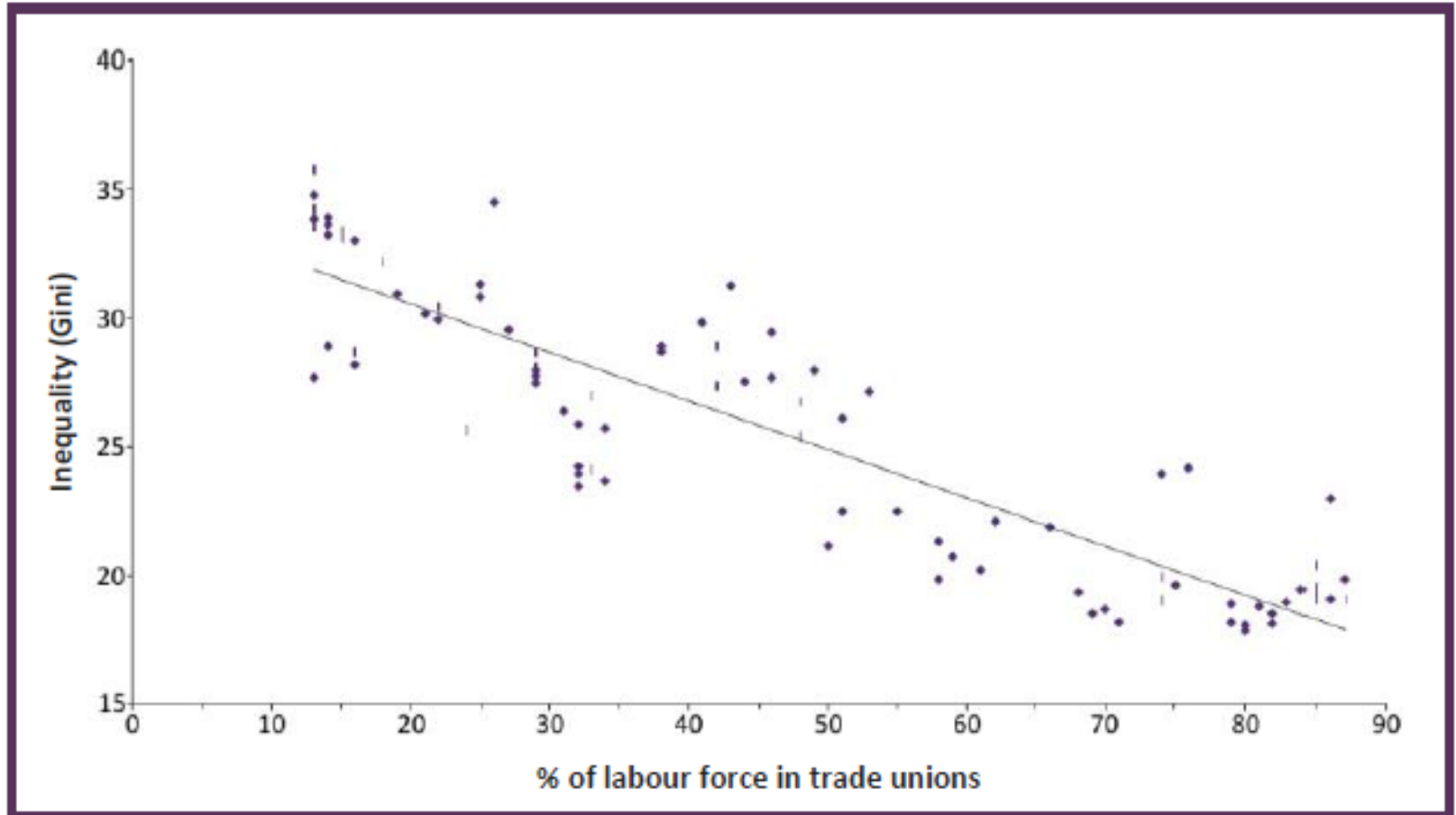
Figure 3 – Unions and shared prosperity in the USA (1918-2008)



Source: Eisenbrey, R and Gordon, C. Economic Snapshot—unions and labor standards (2012). Data from Historical Statistics of the United States, unionstats.com, and Piketty and Saez 2003 The World Top Incomes Database⁷.

Chart 6: Countries with strong unions are less unequal

Figure 2 – Countries with stronger trade unions are less unequal (data for 16 OECD countries 1966-1994)



Source: Gustafsson B, Johansson M. In search of smoking guns: What makes income inequality vary over time in different countries? *American Sociological Review* 1999:585-605.

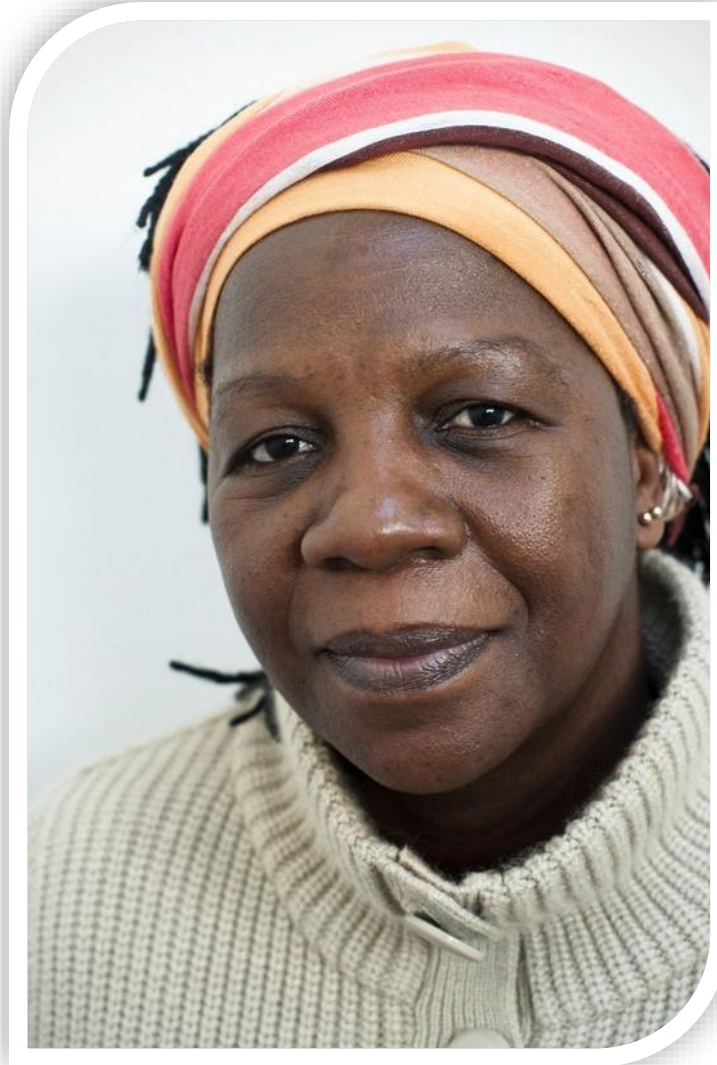
Chart 7: Why does this matter?

- “A greater concentration of wealth could – if unchecked – undermine the principles of meritocracy and democracy. It could undermine the principle of equal rights in the 1948 UDHR.” *Christine Lagarde Managing Director IMF May 2014*
- “Financial markets and institutions have become the masters rather than the servants of the real economy...heightening levels of inequality and posing a systemic threat to economic stability” *Dr Supachai Panitchpakdi S-G UNCTAD 2012*
- “Sustained strong growth is at risk if social inequality grows, or rent-seeking behaviour by owners of natural resources or land is allowed to continue unchecked” *ILO World of Work Report 2014*
- “A decent work deficit exists in varying degrees in most nations, throughout supply chains, and for the majority of women and migrants. People feel abandoned by their governments as they prioritise business interests over the concerns of working people and their families.” *Sharan Burrow General Secretary International TUC*
- “Deepening inequality” is the greatest global risk WEF Outlook on the Global Agenda 2015: “persistent jobless growth” is ranked 2nd

Mansour Ossanlu Iran 2009/14



Gertrude Hambira Zimbabwe 2010



Su Su Nway Burma 2011



Mahdi Abu Dheeb Bahrain 2011-16



Mahdi Abu Dheeb Bahrain



Transient Migrants Mexico



Turkey: labour law reform 2011/12



The Trade Union Bill

The UK's human rights organisations speak out:

The government's Trade Union Bill "represents a major attack on civil liberties in the UK."

- Liberty,
- British Institute of Human Rights,
- Amnesty International UK

The right to strike is a cornerstone of British liberties. The Trade Union Bill threatens that right. SHARE this post if you oppose the bill.



<http://reports.weforum.org/outlook-global-agenda-2015/top-10-trends-of-2015/1-deepening-income-inequality/>

<http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/wealth-having-it-all-and-wanting-more-338125>

<http://www.afscme.org/blog/collective-bargaining-erosion-hits-everyone#.VK7CqMX9wsc.twitter>

<http://classonline.org.uk/pubs/item/the-importance-of-the-labour-movement-in-tackling-inequality>

The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone – Wilkinson & Pickett

Join a Union – TUC guide to which one covers your job/occupation

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/join-union> Unite the Union: Community Membership

<http://www.unitetheunion.org/growing-our-union/communitymembership/>

TU Bill evidence session Tuesday 13 October 3pm Parliament TV

<http://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/6b437a7a-ff4c-4ef1-a2a2-07fb6de07227>

www.amnesty.org.uk/Mahdi

Keep in Touch!

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