

# Update

Issue 4 Spring 2014 Free

CAMPAIGN FOR  
**TRADE UNION FREEDOM**



## Bob Crow 1961-2014

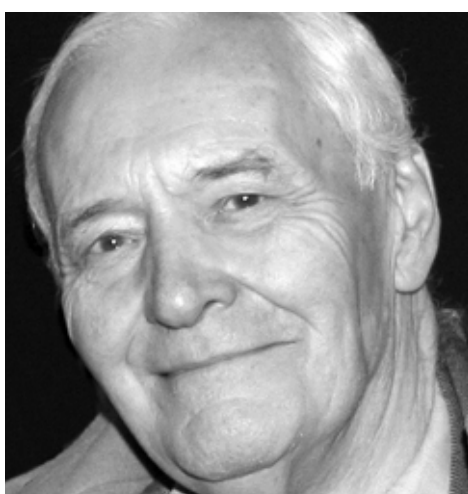
BOB CROW, the general secretary of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers and president of the Campaign For Trade Union Freedom was one of the few union leaders to increase the volume of membership of his union as he fought for better wages and conditions for his members as well as working to safeguard the safety of passengers.

His sudden death aged 52 in March sent a shock wave through the trade union movement as well as attracting national media coverage and tributes not just from trade unionists but from long time adversaries such as London Mayor Boris Johnson.

A straight talking man, his life was devoted to furthering the interests of all working men and women. He refused to compromise, believing that his role was not only to get job security, the best wages, pensions and safety for his members, but also a world that 'lived in peace'.

Bob was born on 13 June, 1961 in the heart of London's East End at Wapping, he was fiercely proud of his working class background doing much to promote its history and culture; he could sing all the songs identified with the movement, and knew all the poems.

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## Tony Benn 1925-2014

Tony Benn, who was a Vice President of the Campaign for Trade Union Freedom was born in 1925 to a life of privilege. However he spent his life preaching socialism and fighting for the rights of the working class and labour movement. His father, Viscount Stansgate was a Labour Minister. Benn, then a Labour MP inherited the title and led a successful campaign which culminated in the introduction of the Peerage Act 1963, enabling him to renounce the title and continue as an MP. He served in parliament for 47 years between 1950 and 2001.

Appointed Postmaster General in the Labour Government of 1964-1970, he oversaw the opening of the Post Office Tower and introduced the Giro. He later served as Minister of Technology and was responsible for the supporting Concorde, a joint Anglo French project, pushing through many of the ideas springing out of Labour's 'white heat of technology'.

Following the defeat of the Labour Party

in 1970, as chairman of the Party he fought the anti-trade union laws introduced by Edward Heath's government.

On Labour's return to power in 1974, he was appointed Secretary of State for Industry. Benn increased nationalised industry wages and introduced the Health and Safety at Work Act; he was responsible for setting up worker co-operatives and reorganising struggling industries, forging many ties with unions which would see him on picket lines and on demonstrations.

In 1975 he became Secretary of State for Energy, a position he continued to hold after Jim Callaghan became Prime Minister. In 1976 following the defeat of his own strategy within cabinet, Benn opposed the decision by Chancellor Healey to seek a loan from the International Monetary Fund. In 1981 he stood against Healey for the deputy leadership of the party and was defeated by one percent.

Benn became a champion of the left as the party began to split with arguments on economic policy and the European Union. He fought for nationalisation, the control of capital and the implementation of industrial democracy. He supported the unification of Ireland.

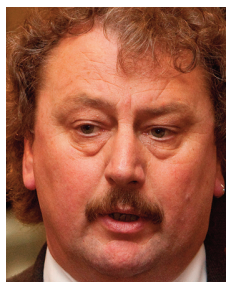
He opposed and demonstrated against wars against Argentina and in Afghanistan and Iraq; on leaving parliament, he became President of Stop the War Coalition, a post he held until his death.

The word 'Bennite' became synonymous with those of radical left wing views. His diaries became best sellers. He travelled throughout the country, promoting socialism as he gave one man shows and spoke at rallies. Paying tribute to him, Unite's Len McCluskey said: 'He was a hero to millions not only because of what he advocated social justice, democracy and peace, but because of the way he advocated it, with passion, decency and without malice. Tony fought for his ideals almost to the end.' **Peta Steel**

**Inside Labour rights to be TTIPed out?**  
*by Adrian Weir*  
**PCS fights check-off attacks**  
*by Nick McCarthy*



# Labour rights to be TTIPed out?



by **Adrian Weir**

CAMPAIGNERS ARE mostly focusing on three key areas being negotiated in the Transatlantic Trade & Industry Partnership between the EU and USA:

- the threat to the National Health Service and other sections of the public sector that may be opened up to the private sector leaving a future Labour Government with no legal right to take back into public ownership
- the quasi-judicial process of the Investor State Dispute Settlement under which multinational corporations may sue nation states whose laws are deemed incompatible with free trade
- opening up European markets to US Frankenstein foods – hormone enriched

beef, chlorinated poultry and genetically modified cereals and salmon.

Which has left the question of labour rights in the treaty largely unanswered. Hardly surprising given the diametrically different industrial relations systems in most of Europe and the USA.

The US has ratified only 14 of the 190 ILO Conventions, which is among the lowest in the world. It has ratified only 2 of the 8 core Conventions (dealing with forced labour, child labour, freedom of association and discrimination). It has not ratified either Convention 87 or 98 and is almost certainly in breach of both, according to the ILO Freedom of Association Committee. The US nevertheless routinely enters into bilateral free trade agreements requiring a bilateral commitment to these core Conventions, though this does not appear to have led to an improvement in US practice.

Twenty-four (of fifty) US states are 'right

to work' states, that is the state has passed a law, under the Taft Hartley Act, 1947, to outlaw any form of union membership agreement (closed or agency shop) between unions and employers.

The TUC's Owen Tudor notes: "... an opinion column in the *Wall Street Journal* ... explains ... Congressional Republicans are only willing to agree TTIP if extending EU labour standards ... to the US is ruled out in advance."

But many in the US unions see a labour chapter in TTIP as opening the possibilities of having a European style social model and worker dialogue with employers:

**Communication Workers of America:**

now we get to benchmark against a more progressive economy and raise up labour engagement here in the United States, we hope that the trade discussions would make improvements to how corporations treat their workers here

**United Steel Workers:** At a minimum an agreement should expand on existing EU mechanisms that provide for information disclosure and consultation between workers and transnational enterprises, strengthen regulations concerning workplace health and safety ... and include best practice regulations concerning contingent workers ...

**AFL-CIO:** ... it is important to note that the EU now includes Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Slovakia – countries whose economies, incomes and worker protections lag behind most of their EU counterparts. In addition, Poland has been engaging in so-called 'labour market flexibilities' for a generation and Hungary's current government has likewise been intent on destroying many worker protections. American workers should be aware that some multinational corporations could be intending to use a US-EU trade agreement to move jobs from the US to these countries whose wages and worker protections do not reach the level of the rest of the EU

**International Association of**

**Machinists:** Negotiators should also condition each country's participation on its adoption, implementation and effective enforcement of fundamental human rights reflected by International Labor Organisation (ILO) Conventions and jurisprudence ... Negotiators should ensure upward harmonisation of labor and employment laws, regulations, policies and directives so that both



regions compete on a level playing field – a level playing field that incorporates ILO Conventions

The IAM position moves the US unions onto the ground occupied, at least publicly, by the European Commission whose initial position is:

In the labour domain, the starting point for discussions should be the parties' existing commitments in relevant areas, including the ILO 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Rights and Principles at Work, as well as its follow up, and the 2008 ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalisation, which applies to all ILO members ... the EU considers that ILO core labour standards ... are an essential element to be integrated in the context of a trade agreement

The **European Trade Union**

**Confederation** has specific concerns about the lack of ratification of ILO Conventions and violations of fundamental labour rights in the US, notably on the right to organise and negotiate collectively and particularly but not exclusively in Right to Work states.

## 'The US has ratified only 14 of the 190 ILO Conventions'

In the British context, it is inconceivable that the current government would sign up to enforceable ILO Conventions. Our labour law, mainly enacted by the previous Conservative government, is intentionally outside of these protections - making the UK effectively a 'right to work' state.

Therefore, to appease British Conservatives and US Republican supporters of 'right to work' it may be that rights organise, rights to bargain collectively and rights to strike are not included in any labour rights chapter. It may be that the treaty labour rights chapter will focus on those rights that are currently applicable across the EU:

- information and consultation, including works councils
- health and safety
- agency and temporary workers.

Clearly this is an issue that will increasingly move up the agenda of campaigners on trade union and labour rights in the coming months.

**Adrian Weir** is the campaign's assistant national secretary

# PCS fights check-off attacks

by **Nick McCarthy**



THE PCS NATIONAL executive committee is taking steps to protect our membership and income in the face of further Government attacks by asking new

and existing members to pay their subscriptions by direct debit.

Following measures to reduce employment rights and restrict facility time, the Government now seems to be trying to undermine union finances to hamper our campaigning and organising against more large scale cuts.

Despite the High Court upholding the contractual right of employees in the department of Communities and Local Government to pay their union subs by check-off last year, the Government started 2014 with a plan to end such arrangements across the Civil Service.

In January the Cabinet Office wrote to each government department stating that check-off is "undesirable" and asking them to review their arrangements. The letter recognises that check-off is a delegated matter: departments have not yet made decisions about ending check-off or a timetable. However, the Cabinet Office has made it clear that Ministers will have a direct influence in the decision.

Quizzed in Parliament on 12 March by MP Ian Murray, a member of the PCS parliamentary group, Minister for the Cabinet Office Francis Maude was forced to concede that check-off is a matter for departments. The Minister looked rattled as he faced questions about the cost of ending the system. Shadow minister Michael Dugher referred to a document he said had been "suppressed by ministers" which showed that the cost of ending the system in the Department for Work and Pensions alone could be over £1million. Maude



claimed that the estimate had since been revised down but refused to give a new figure.

PCS is calling on the Cabinet Office to publish the full cost estimates. We are working with our parliamentary group and other politicians to push for transparency and an end to this latest attempt to undermine our union. More than 50 MPs have signed a Parliamentary petition on the issue and more than 3000 emails have been sent to deputy prime minister Nick Clegg urging him to intervene.

PCS will do all we can - politically, legally and industrially - to challenge moves to end check-off, especially where it is used as a deliberate union-busting tactic. However we also intend to take control of the situation and make plans to assure our independence in the long term from an increasingly hostile employer. This includes making direct debit the standard method of paying subscriptions for civil service, non-civil service and commercial sector members. By taking steps to recruit and retain members in all these areas we will be able to defeat this attack and move forward stronger and more united than ever.

**Nick McCarthy** is PCS head of campaigns, communications and organising

● Campaign for Trade Union Freedom ● Institute of Employment Rights  
● Center for Labour and Social Studies @ The Durham Miners' Gala

## EVE OF GALA RALLY

Friday 11 June 6pm to 7.15pm Cavit Room, Radisson Blu Hotel  
Framwellgate Waterside Durham DH1 5TL

**John Hendy QC** CTUF/IER

**Professor Richard Wilkinson** co author of *The Spirit Level*

**Katy Clark MP** North Ayrshire and Arran

Chair **Tony Burke** Chair Campaign for Trade Union Freedom

*continued from page one*

His father, a docker, was a lifelong member of the Transport and General Workers Union (now Unite) and Crow was brought up to read the *Morning Star* and the *Financial Times*, the latter so that he could understand its 'lies'. The family subsequently moved to Hainault in Essex. On leaving school, Crow joined London Transport as a tea boy, he then joined a tree felling group, later moving on to heavy track repairing.

He joined the National Union of Railwaymen and in 1983 was elected as their local representative; in 1985 he became National Officer for track workers.

In 1990, the NUR merged with the National Union of Seamen becoming the RMT. In 1991, Crow became the London Underground representative on the union's National Executive becoming Assistant General Secretary and in February 2002, was elected to succeed Jimmy Knapp as General Secretary, he was also a member of the TUC General Council and last year was appointed to its Executive Committee.

His fight for his members, which included standing up not only to the management, but also to the Government, both Labour and Conservative, would bring him the criticism of the media and the right and centre left, who were quick to paint him as a 'trouble maker' and a fully paid up member of the trade union "awkward squad".

But to his members Crow quickly earned

a reputation as the man who looked after their interests, membership increased from 57,000 in 2002 to 80,000 in 2008. London tube drivers' pay rose to £52,000, nearly twice the national average wage.

Manuel Cortes, the leader of transport union TSSA stood with Crow on the picket line: 'Bob Crow was admired by his members and feared by employers, which is exactly how he liked it. It was a privilege to campaign and fight alongside him, because he never gave an inch.'

Mark Serwolka, General Secretary of the Public and Civil Service Union had no doubt that Crow had played an integral part in looking after his members: 'Bob was a tireless fighter for RMT members, working class people and was a towering force in the trade union movement.'

Support for Crow didn't just come from the leaders of unions associated with taking a hard stand on industrial issues it also came from people such as Cathy Warwick, Chief Executive of The Royal College of Midwives. 'He was' she said, 'a staunch supporter and advocate of rights for workers and a fairer and more just world for working people. He invested his work with passion, commitment and dedication.'

Paying tribute to him, TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady said: 'Bob was an outstanding unionist who tirelessly fought for his members, his industry and the wider trade union movement'.

Looking back on Crow's life, Len McCluskey, General Secretary of Unite said:

'Bob was a life long and highly successful fighter for the interests of his members and for working people as a whole. I am sure that is the only epitaph that he would have wanted.'

In 1983 he joined the Communist Party of Great Britain, and following its' dissolution the Communist Party of Britain. His heroes were Che Guevara and Lenin, keeping a bust of him in his office, another was the Irish trade union leader Jim Connell, and Crow supported the erection of a memorial to him in Ireland.

He briefly joined Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party, but believing that all socialist parties should unite, had in 2007 called for the establishment of a new party for the working class. The RMT itself would eventually split from the Labour Party. He was also staunchly against membership of the EU, stating it represented big business and not working people.

He was a quick thinker, an outstanding debater and his ready wit was legendary in the trade union movement.

A life long supporter of Millwall football club, many journalists as well as his many friends would find themselves sitting alongside him at a match. His burley figure disguised a deeply sensitive man who was as proud of his members as he was of his family.

He is survived by his partner Nicola Horeau and his son and three daughters.

**Peta Steel**



**The Campaign for Trade Union Freedom** is sponsored by 26 national trade union organisations and over 200 branches, trades councils and individuals and financed solely by supporters fees from trade union bodies and individuals. By becoming a supporter you or your organisation show your agreement with the call to repeal the anti-trade union laws, and aid the Campaign's fight. Please make cheques payable to Campaign, for Trade Union Freedom and send to the CTUF, 4th Floor, 1 Islington, Liverpool, L3 8EG. Donations are gratefully received.

## Affiliation costs

### National Unions

100,000 + £650  
less than 100,000 £150

### Regional Unions £75

### Union Branches

500+ £75  
less than 500 £35

### Associations of TUCs £35

### Trade Union Councils £35

### Strike Committees, non-union organisations & individuals £15

Union/TUC

National/Region/Branch

Name of secretary

Address

e mail

*We may contact you with information about the Campaign.*