

## Trade Union Reform

**Issue:** On 10 January 2015, Patrick McLoughlin announced the measures the next Conservative government will introduce to reform Trade Union regulation.

- **Trade Unions are valuable institutions in our society and have a strong history. But it's not right that their politicised leaders can hold the country to ransom with demands that only a small percentage of their members voted for.**
- **We have already said the next Conservative government will change the law so strikes cannot go ahead without genuine support from members. But we will go further to protect hardworking taxpayers from disruptive strike action in the most important public services. We will toughen the threshold for strikes in core public services, undertake a review in to the use of 'Minimum Service Levels' and end the ban on employers from hiring agency staff to cover for striking workers.**
- **This will give hardworking taxpayers the peace of mind that the most important services will always be available for them.**

### The Problem

- **People's everyday lives have been disrupted by strikes with very little support from members.** The turnouts and ballot support for recent industrial action in the public sector have been so low as to call into question the legitimacy of the mandate for this action. For example, last year's tube strikes were voted for by fewer than a third of the RMT's members, and a smaller proportion still of the workforce of the London Underground system.

### Our Solution

- **Introducing a threshold of 40 per cent for our core public services - so a strike ballot can only be lawful if 40 per cent of all those entitled to vote in a ballot vote in favour of strike action (as recommended by the CBI<sup>1</sup>).** In addition to the ban on police officers, prison officers and the armed forces from striking at all and a new 50 per cent turnout threshold for all other services, we will introduce a tougher voting threshold for our core public services – health, schools, transport and fire.

These are the services where industrial action has a collateral impact on members of the public that is disproportionate and unfair. Strikes can put lives at risk, prevent people from getting to work and earning a living - either because the trains aren't running or because parents can't get to work because they are looking after kids prevented from going to school because of a strike - and prevent businesses from managing their workforces effectively.

As recommended by the CBI in 2010, a threshold of 40 per cent of those entitled to vote in a ballot voting in favour is appropriate. This is in line with the statutory union recognition rules, where 40 per cent of all eligible workers must take part in a vote and a majority of those vote yes for the Central Arbitration Committee to award recognition.

Of the 119 significant ballots for industrial action conducted between August 2010 and December 2014 – nearly three quarters of these (86) would have been invalid under these thresholds.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Keeping the wheels turning - modernising the legal framework of industrial relations' – CBI, September 2010

<sup>2</sup> The figures have been compiled from data made public by the trade unions directly or reported in the media. In a number of known ballots (15), the trade unions have not made public all the information they hold about turnout in the ballot, these have therefore been excluded from the totals. This data does not include ballot results which the trade union and employer have not publicised or where the dispute involves only a small number of workers and/or any action would have with little or no affect.