

Tuesday, 22 September 2020

Australians face risk of another Abbott-designed, anti-worker trade deal

The peak union bodies of Australia, the UK and New Zealand have released a joint statement on trade talks that are underway. The Morrison Government is currently negotiating a trade deal with the UK Government - which recently appointed Tony Abbott as trade advisor - in secret.

British workers have valid concerns about Abbott's conflict of interest negotiating a deal with his former coalition colleagues, but Australian workers remember all too well that even when he was Prime Minister, Abbott's deals did not favour Australians.

The Australian public are denied the right to know what will be in a new trade agreement with the UK which will likely directly impact millions of jobs. With Tony Abbott – who oversaw Australia signing on to the China Free Trade Agreement – working alongside the Morrison Government we are concerned it will include the same anti-worker provisions which appear in most trade deals negotiated by this Government.

- No adequate protections for local workers and their jobs
- Unregulated exploitation of vulnerable migrant workers
- Deregulation of public services
- Investor-State Dispute Settlement provisions that allow foreign corporations to sue governments for changes to domestic law

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

“The COVID-19 crisis has shown the importance of strong Government support for local workers, and a robust and comprehensive set of rights for working people. Instead, this agreement has the potential to weaken the ability of our government to protect working people and expose workers to exploitation.

“We need to end the system which allows Governments to negotiate trade deals in secret and make sure that all deals put working people first.

“Australian, UK and New Zealand unions have released a joint statement outlining what a trade deal between countries should look like, in order to protect workers' rights, local industry, public services and national sovereignty.

“An anti-worker trade deal will limit the ability of the Australian Government to respond to the ongoing pandemic and economic crisis. We need strong Government investment in reconstruction and local jobs and to strengthen the rights of all working people.”

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