# Labour’s Employment Rights Bill sparks fresh controversy amid escalating bin strikes in Birmingham and beyond



Labour's Employment Rights Bill, recently announced by Angela Rayner in the House of Commons, is stirring controversy just as bin strikes in Birmingham extend into their eighth consecutive week. As rubbish accumulates on the streets of Birmingham, the ongoing strikes are drawing comparisons to the severe disruptions experienced during the Winter of Discontent in the late 1970s.

The current strike action is not isolated, as it has also spread to Sheffield, where Unite union members have been striking since August. These workers are engaged in a dispute with Veolia, the local service provider responsible for waste management. The grievances have escalated to the point where a giant inflatable rat has been prominently featured at picket lines, symbolising discontent and aimed at heightening awareness of their plight. Sharon Graham, General Secretary of Unite, has made a bold statement, saying, “anyone who does business with Veolia will now be hearing from Unite no matter where they operate.”

In Leeds, the situation has also become tense, with protests reaching the steps of Leeds City Hall. The local council is facing criticism due to its contract with Veolia, which serves approximately 15 million people across over 25 local authorities in the UK. The ongoing strikes are raising concerns about the welfare of local communities and the efficacy of public services when waste management is critically disrupted.

Amid rising tensions, criticism has been directed at the Labour Government for its response to the situation. Angela Rayner's announcement of the Employment Rights Bill has led to assertions that the legislation will inadvertently exacerbate issues related to industrial action and disputes. The bill, which Rayner claims is “resetting industrial relations,” is reportedly set to impose significant costs on businesses, estimated at £5 billion annually. Critics are labelling it the ‘Unemployment Rights Bill’, suggesting it will ultimately endanger jobs rather than bolster workers' rights.

One key aspect of the proposed legislation is a change in the requirements for trade union recognition. Under the current law, unions must demonstrate that at least 10% of workers are members to be recognised. The new bill seeks to reduce this threshold to just 2%. Furthermore, the existing requirement that 40% of all workers must support a union for it to be recognised would be eliminated entirely. This has raised alarms about the potential for increased industrial action, with concerns that it may facilitate more frequent and wide-scale strikes akin to the disruptive events seen in Birmingham.

As the strikes continue and the implications of the Employment Rights Bill unfold, the interaction between workers' rights and local governance remains a pivotal topic for residents and local officials alike. The situation is evolving, as stakeholders, including unions and local governments, navigate the complexities of these disputes against a backdrop of changing industrial relations legislation.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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