

Britain has bigger problems than the unions

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[FT.com / Columnists / Philip Stephens - Britain has bigger problems than the unions.](#)

Sound comment in the FT this morning:

So it is back to the 1970s. Or so the [Conservatives](#) say. Britain's present bout of industrial unrest looks like a gift for David Cameron's party. With a general election six weeks or so away, what could be better for the opposition than the chance to summon up grim memories of the winter of discontent?

The analogy with the crippling strikes that saw Margaret Thatcher sweep Labour from office in 1979 is at very best far-fetched.

I have my doubts, [too], as to whether floating voters will be as impressed by Mr Cameron's rhetoric as are Conservative footsoldiers. For one thing, quite a few of them work in the public sector.

Teachers, police officers and nurses do not take kindly to being branded militants. For another, most people probably view well-heeled bankers clutching their large post-crash bonuses as better candidates for their ire.

Quite so.

And many - indeed most of those really in [middle England](#) - earning about what cabin crew get - know that this recession is being managed to make them pay and let bankers off.

Why should they feel any form of satisfaction at BA bashing people making a reasonable claim for reasonable rights when they know they're next in line to be abused?

The Tories need to be careful. Not many can remember the winter of discontent now - you have to be in your fifties. And age has left memory of a very different seventies. Cameron's on dodgy ground. Which is good news.