

Are you really surprised the Scots want to quit?

Published: January 14, 2026, 12:32 am

The Scottish referendum is dominating debate right now, but it is wise to recall why that is the case.

Take [this from Frances O'Grady, TUC General Secretary, writing on its blog yesterday to mark the launch of the TUC Congress:](#)

The TUC's Congress starts in Liverpool today, and a issue at the top of many minds will be the threat posed by the Conservative Party's new proposals on strike ballots.

These are not just a few bureaucratic obstacles that will make life a bit more difficult for trade unions. Rather they work together to make official strikes close to impossible and will open up trade union activists to increased surveillance by the state.

The new rules should be considered either draconian or absurd. First there has to be a 50% turnout for a strike ballot when many elections to parliament don't achieve that. Second, they have to be postal ballots when the post is moving into history. Third, the admin rules are tightened to give more legal opportunity to challenge any strike. And last those on strike will be subject to considerably more monitoring as if each picket were an enemy of the state.

As Frances says:

The Conservative proposals are an attack on our fundamental civil liberties, but it will also act to lower living standards for the many — whether or not they are union members. With these new proposals, the Conservatives seem to found have a simple slogan for the next election — “Keeping wages down for ever”.

And you wonder why some north of the border reject the idea of wanting to be linked to a country where such abuses of freedom are not only proposed but have government backing?

I'm not.

Disclosure: I have undertaken work for the TUC since 2007