

This book tells the story of the Trade Disputes Act 1906, in celebration of its centenary. That Act was one of the most important pieces of labour legislation ever passed by a British Parliament. It provided very simple legal protection for the right to strike for sixty-five years, and left a legacy which is found on the statute book to this day. The substance of today's law however, is far removed and much weaker than the position established in 1906. For that reason, the Trade Union Freedom Bill is designed to soften some of the harder edges of the Thatcher bequest.

The 15 authors contributing to this authoritative report – all involved in the Institute's unique network of academics, lawyers and trade unionists – examine the twists and turns in the judicial and statutory developments surrounding the right to strike over the last 100 years. It begins by reviewing the industrial and legal origins of the Trade Disputes Act before cataloguing how the vulnerable immunities introduced by the Act were systematically unravelled by a class conscious judiciary then periodically reconstructed by sympathetic politicians.

The final chapters consider the savage deconstruction of trade union rights during the Conservative years of the 80's and 90's and assesses where we go from here. Our system of *immunities* is compared with the European tradition of *fundamental rights* as protected by national constitutions. And the book concludes by proposing the initial steps required from a Trade Union Freedom Act if UK laws are to meet the needs of working people in the 21st century.

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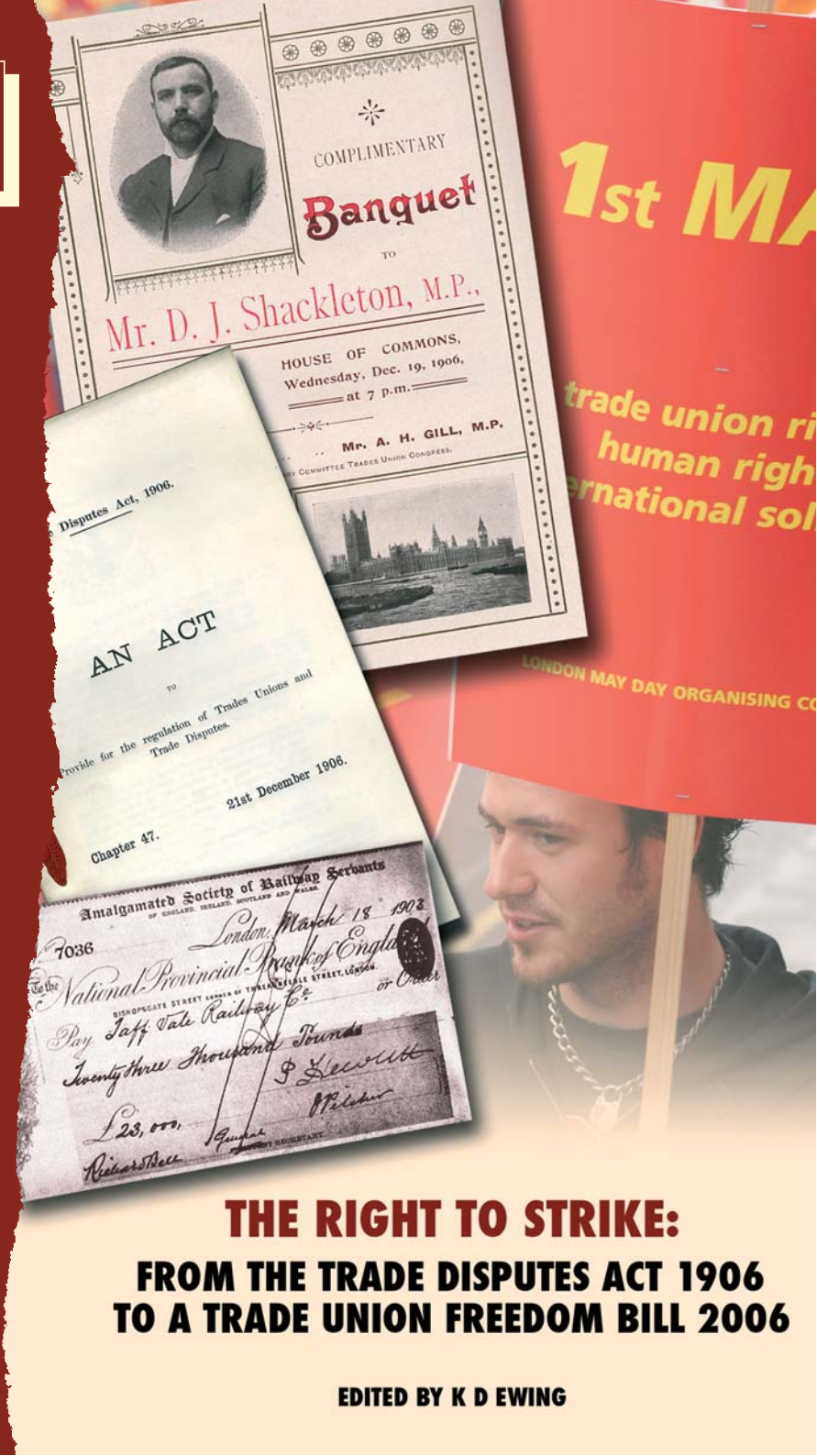
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EDITED BY K D EWING