



Concern over safety law changes

A government amendment to the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill would water down health and safety regulations across the board, according to personal injury expert Karl Tonks. The president of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) said: 'At the moment, where an employer has been found to have breached health and safety regulations and someone has been injured as a result, the injured person has an automatic right to claim compensation. The law has been clear on this point since a landmark case was brought in 1898. But the government is now seeking changes which will mean the injured person will no longer be able to rely on this right, but will have effectively to start from scratch by proving that negligence has occurred.' He said the 'completely illogical' move reflected a government 'obsession' with cutting safety regulation that 'also sends a clear signal to bosses that the safety of workers is no longer to be considered a priority.' Speaking in the Commons debate on the Bill, where the measure was condemned by opposition MPs, Labour's Iain Wright said the government belief the move would boost the economy was 'economically illiterate.' Commenting after the debate, a TUC spokesperson said: 'This proposal was introduced with no consultation and there is no indication of what regulations the civil liability changes will apply to, but it is a disgrace that they are transferring the cost of an injury from the employer on to the worker, who will already have suffered the pain and suffering.' In another amendment to the Bill, the government is seeking changes to the law that would dramatically undermine the rights of workplace safety whistleblowers.

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