



17 October 2012

Government red tape ‘obsession’ to put safety law back by 100 years

A last-minute addition to the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill has put workplace health and safety back into the Victorian age, according to a not-for-profit campaign group.

A new clause was introduced to the Bill yesterday (16 October) as it went into its final stages in the House of Commons, which effectively waters down workplace health and safety regulations across the board, according to Karl Tonks, president of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL).

“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,” he explained. “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 went on.

“Not only is this move completely illogical to most right-thinking people, but it reduces the strength of current employment protection and will make pursuing an injured person’s rights more complicated and more expensive.

“It also sends a clear signal to bosses that the safety of workers is no longer to be considered a priority.”



And Tonks also expressed deep reservations about the Government's programme of reform in this area.

"What is particularly disturbing is that the Government gave itself until next summer to review this area of the law but instead it has been introduced at the last minute, when the Bill is halfway through its passage, without review and without consultation.

"In its obsession with cutting what it sees as health and safety 'red tape', the Government is playing fast and loose with people's safety," he said. "The workforce of this country deserves better."

-ends-

Notes to editors:

- APIL (Association of Personal Injury Lawyers) is a not-for-profit organisation whose members are dedicated to campaigning for improvements in the law to help people who are injured or become ill through no fault of their own
- For more information, contact Chris Birkle, press and communications officer, t: 0115 943 5409, e: chris.birkle@apil.org.uk, or Jane Hartwell, press and communications officer, t: 0115 943 5416, e: jane.hartwell@apil.org.uk
- Visit the association's website at www.apil.org.uk
- Follow us on Twitter: @APIL