



Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Mr Justin Bowden
National Officer, GMB Union
Mary Turner House
22 Stephenson Way
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04 February 2021

Dear Mr Bowden,

Evidence session follow-up

Thank you for taking the time to answer questions from my Committee on Tuesday.

It is unfortunate that we have ended up in the position of having to take oral evidence on this industrial dispute. All members of the Committee – on a cross-party basis – are keen to see a positive resolution as soon as possible.

The main issue that my Committee will be taking forward is that of ‘fire and re-hire’.

You will have seen that there is cross-party consensus in the House of Commons, including from the Government, that ‘fire and re-hire’ should only be used when all other avenues have been exhausted. Indeed, there has also been widespread support for ‘fire and re-hire’ to be reformed in the upcoming Employment Rights Bill.

My colleagues on the Transport Select Committee understandably raised significant concerns about the decision by British Airways to use ‘fire and re-hire’ at the start of a redundancy process.

My Committee considers the use of ‘fire and re-hire’ tactics in labour disputes during the pandemic to be wrong. The best businesses are those which work in collaboration with their trade unions, who understand the need for change, but also rightly play an important role in collective bargaining on behalf of their members.

In his evidence to my Committee, Mr O’Shea said that Centrica/British Gas had decided to issue a ‘fire and re-hire’ notice at the start of the negotiations on the basis of legal advice received from external counsel. Mr O’Shea offered to provide that legal advice to my Committee for our private consideration. I understand that you offered to share the GMBs equivalent advice and would be grateful if you could provide that, confidentially, to my Committee.

My Clerks will be in touch to take this forward and I am copying this letter to Huw Merriman MP, Chair of the Transport Committee, for his information.

DARREN JONES MP
CHAIR, BUSINESS, ENERGY & INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY COMMITTEE