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Employment Rights Act 1996

1996 CHAPTER 18

PART X E+W+S

UNFAIR DISMISSAL

CHAPTER I E+W+S

RIGHT NOT TO BE UNFAIRLY DISMISSED

Fairness

98 General. E+W+S

- (1) In determining for the purposes of this Part whether the dismissal of an employee is fair or unfair, it is for the employer to show—
 - (a) the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal, and
 - (b) that it is either a reason falling within subsection (2) or some other substantial reason of a kind such as to justify the dismissal of an employee holding the position which the employee held.
- (2) A reason falls within this subsection if it—
 - (a) relates to the capability or qualifications of the employee for performing work of the kind which he was employed by the employer to do,
 - (b) relates to the conduct of the employee,
 - (c) is that the employee was redundant, or
 - (d) is that the employee could not continue to work in the position which he held without contravention (either on his part or on that of his employer) of a duty or restriction imposed by or under an enactment.
- (3) In subsection (2)(a)—
 - (a) "capability", in relation to an employee, means his capability assessed by reference to skill, aptitude, health or any other physical or mental quality, and

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- (b) "qualifications", in relation to an employee, means any degree, diploma or other academic, technical or professional qualification relevant to the position which he held.
- (4) Where the employer has fulfilled the requirements of subsection (1), the determination of the question whether the dismissal is fair or unfair (having regard to the reason shown by the employer)—
 - (a) depends on whether in the circumstances (including the size and administrative resources of the employer's undertaking) the employer acted reasonably or unreasonably in treating it as a sufficient reason for dismissing the employee, and
 - (b) shall be determined in accordance with equity and the substantial merits of the case.
- (5) Where the employee is taken to be dismissed for the purposes of this Part by virtue of section 96, subsection (4)(a) applies as if for the words "acted reasonably" onwards there were substituted the words "would have been acting reasonably or unreasonably in treating it as a sufficient reason for dismissing the employee if she had not been absent from work, and".
- (6) Subsections (4) and (5) are subject to—
 - (a) sections 99 to 107 of this Act, and
 - (b) sections 152, 153 and 238 of the MITrade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (dismissal on ground of trade union membership or activities or in connection with industrial action).

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C1 S. 98(1) modified (1.1.1999) by 1998 Measure No. 1, s. 6(1), Sch. 3 para. 3(2)(b); Instrument dated 14.10.1998 made by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York

Marginal Citations

M1 1992 c. 52.

VALID FROM 01/10/2004

98A X1 Procedural fairness E+W+S

- (1) An employee who is dismissed shall be regarded for the purposes of this Part as unfairly dismissed if—
 - (a) one of the procedures set out in Part 1 of Schedule 2 to the Employment Act 2002 (dismissal and disciplinary procedures) applies in relation to the dismissal,
 - (b) the procedure has not been completed, and
 - (c) the non-completion of the procedure is wholly or mainly attributable to failure by the employer to comply with its requirements.
- (2) Subject to subsection (1), failure by an employer to follow a procedure in relation to the dismissal of an employee shall not be regarded for the purposes of section 98(4) (a) as by itself making the employer's action unreasonable if he shows that he would have decided to dismiss the employee if he had followed the procedure.

Chapter I – Right not to be unfairly dismissed

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(3) For the purposes of this section, any question as to the application of a procedure set out in Part 1 of Schedule 2 to the Employment Act 2002, completion of such a procedure or failure to comply with the requirements of such a procedure shall be determined by reference to regulations under section 31 of that Act.

Editorial Information

X1 The insertion of the new heading "Other dismissals" in Pt. X Ch. I on 1.10.2006 gives rise to a change in the structure of this legislation on SLD which breaks the continuity of historical versions of the existing provisions which are now brought under that new heading.

VALID FROM 06/04/2005

98B X2Jury service E+W+S

- (1) An employee who is dismissed shall be regarded for the purposes of this Part as unfairly dismissed if the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that the employee—
 - (a) has been summoned under the Juries Act 1974, the Coroners Act 1988, the Court of Session Act 1988 or the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 to attend for service as a juror, or
 - (b) has been absent from work because he attended at any place in pursuance of being so summoned.
- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply in relation to an employee who is dismissed if the employer shows—
 - (a) that the circumstances were such that the employee's absence in pursuance of being so summoned was likely to cause substantial injury to the employer's undertaking,
 - (b) that the employer brought those circumstances to the attention of the employee,
 - (c) that the employee refused or failed to apply to the appropriate officer for excusal from or a deferral of the obligation to attend in pursuance of being so summoned, and
 - (d) that the refusal or failure was not reasonable.
- (3) In paragraph (c) of subsection (2) "the appropriate officer" means—
 - (a) in the case of a person who has been summoned under the Juries Act 1974, the officer designated for the purposes of section 8, 9 or, as the case may be, 9A of that Act;
 - (b) in the case of a person who has been summoned under the Coroners Act 1988, a person who is the appropriate officer for the purposes of any rules made under subsection (1) of section 32 of that Act by virtue of subsection (2) of that section;
 - (c) in the case of a person who has been summoned under the Court of Session Act 1988, either—
 - (i) the clerk of court issuing the citation to attend for jury service; or

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- (ii) the clerk of the court before which the person is cited to attend for jury service;
- (d) in the case of a person who has been summoned under the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995, either—
 - (i) the clerk of court issuing the citation to attend for jury service; or
 - (ii) the clerk of the court before which the person has been cited to attend for jury service;

and references in that paragraph to a refusal or failure to apply include references to a refusal or failure to give a notice under section 1(2)(b) of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1980.

Editorial Information

X2 The insertion of the new heading "Other dismissals" in Pt. X Ch. I on 1.10.2006 gives rise to a change in the structure of this legislation on SLD which breaks the continuity of historical versions of the existing provisions which are now brought under that new heading.

99 Pregnancy and childbirth. E+W+S

- (1) An employee who is dismissed shall be regarded for the purposes of this Part as unfairly dismissed if—
 - (a) the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that she is pregnant or any other reason connected with her pregnancy,
 - (b) her maternity leave period is ended by the dismissal and the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that she has given birth to a child or any other reason connected with her having given birth to a child,
 - (c) her contract of employment is terminated after the end of her maternity leave period and the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that she took, or availed herself of the benefits of, maternity leave,
 - (d) the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is a relevant requirement, or a relevant recommendation, as defined by section 66(2), or
 - (e) her maternity leave period is ended by the dismissal, the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that she is redundant and section 77 has not been complied with.
- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1)(c)—
 - (a) a woman takes maternity leave if she is absent from work during her maternity leave period, and
 - (b) a woman avails herself of the benefits of maternity leave if, during her maternity leave period, she avails herself of the benefit of any of the terms and conditions of her employment preserved by section 71 during that period.
- (3) An employee who is dismissed shall also be regarded for the purposes of this Part as unfairly dismissed if—
 - (a) before the end of her maternity leave period she gave to her employer a certificate from a registered medical practitioner stating that by reason of disease or bodily or mental disablement she would be incapable of work after the end of that period,

Chapter I – Right not to be unfairly dismissed

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- (b) her contract of employment was terminated within the period of four weeks beginning immediately after the end of her maternity leave period in circumstances in which she continued to be incapable of work and the certificate remained current, and
- (c) the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that she has given birth to a child or any other reason connected with her having given birth to a child.

(4) Where—

- (a) an employee has the right conferred by section 79,
- (b) it is not practicable by reason of redundancy for the employer to permit her to return in accordance with that right, and
- (c) no offer is made of such alternative employment as is referred to in section 81, the dismissal of the employee which is treated as taking place by virtue of section 96 is to be regarded for the purposes of this Part as unfair.

100 X3 Health and safety cases. E+W+S

- (1) An employee who is dismissed shall be regarded for the purposes of this Part as unfairly dismissed if the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that—
 - (a) having been designated by the employer to carry out activities in connection with preventing or reducing risks to health and safety at work, the employee carried out (or proposed to carry out) any such activities,
 - (b) being a representative of workers on matters of health and safety at work or member of a safety committee—
 - (i) in accordance with arrangements established under or by virtue of any enactment, or
 - (ii) by reason of being acknowledged as such by the employer,

the employee performed (or proposed to perform) any functions as such a representative or a member of such a committee,

- (c) being an employee at a place where—
 - (i) there was no such representative or safety committee, or
 - (ii) there was such a representative or safety committee but it was not reasonably practicable for the employee to raise the matter by those means,

he brought to his employer's attention, by reasonable means, circumstances connected with his work which he reasonably believed were harmful or potentially harmful to health or safety,

- (d) in circumstances of danger which the employee reasonably believed to be serious and imminent and which he could not reasonably have been expected to avert, he left (or proposed to leave) or (while the danger persisted) refused to return to his place of work or any dangerous part of his place of work, or
- (e) in circumstances of danger which the employee reasonably believed to be serious and imminent, he took (or proposed to take) appropriate steps to protect himself or other persons from the danger.
- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1)(e) whether steps which an employee took (or proposed to take) were appropriate is to be judged by reference to all the circumstances

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including, in particular, his knowledge and the facilities and advice available to him at the time.

(3) Where the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal of an employee is that specified in subsection (1)(e), he shall not be regarded as unfairly dismissed if the employer shows that it was (or would have been) so negligent for the employee to take the steps which he took (or proposed to take) that a reasonable employer might have dismissed him for taking (or proposing to take) them.

Editorial Information

X3 The insertion of the new heading "Other dismissals" in Pt. X Ch. I on 1.10.2006 gives rise to a change in the structure of this legislation on SLD which breaks the continuity of historical versions of the existing provisions which are now brought under that new heading.

101 X4 Shop workers and betting workers who refuse Sunday work. E+W

- (1) Where an employee who is—
 - (a) a protected shop worker or an opted-out shop worker, or
 - (b) a protected betting worker or an opted-out betting worker,

is dismissed, he shall be regarded for the purposes of this Part as unfairly dismissed if the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that he refused (or proposed to refuse) to do shop work, or betting work, on Sunday or on a particular Sunday.

- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply in relation to an opted-out shop worker or an opted-out betting worker where the reason (or principal reason) for the dismissal is that he refused (or proposed to refuse) to do shop work, or betting work, on any Sunday or Sundays falling before the end of the notice period.
- (3) A shop worker or betting worker who is dismissed shall be regarded for the purposes of this Part as unfairly dismissed if the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that the shop worker or betting worker gave (or proposed to give) an opting-out notice to the employer.
- (4) For the purposes of section 36(2)(b) or 41(1)(b), the appropriate date in relation to this section is the effective date of termination.

Editorial Information

X4 The insertion of the new heading "Other dismissals" in Pt. X Ch. I on 1.10.2006 gives rise to a change in the structure of this legislation on SLD which breaks the continuity of historical versions of the existing provisions which are now brought under that new heading.

Chapter I – Right not to be unfairly dismissed

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VALID FROM 01/10/1998

[F1101A Working time cases. E+W+S

An employee who is dismissed shall be regarded for the purposes of this Part as unfairly dismissed if the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that the employee—

- (a) refused (or proposed to refuse) to comply with a requirement which the employer imposed (or proposed to impose) in contravention of the ^{M2}Working Time Regulations 1998,
- (b) refused (or proposed to refuse) to forgo a right conferred on him by those Regulations,
- (c) failed to sign a workforce agreement for the purposes of those Regulations, or to enter into, or agree to vary or extend, any other agreement with his employer which is provided for in those Regulations, or
- (d) being—
 - (i) a representative of members of the workforce for the purposes of Schedule 1 to those Regulations, or
 - (ii) a candidate in an election in which any person elected will, on being elected, be such a representative,

performed (or proposed to perform) any functions or activities as such a representative or candidate.]

Textual Amendments

F1 S. 101A inserted (1.10.1998) by S.I. 1998/1833, reg. 32(1)

Marginal Citations

M2 S.I. 1998/1833

VALID FROM 06/10/1996

102 Trustees of occupational pension schemes. E+W+S

- (1) An employee who is dismissed shall be regarded for the purposes of this Part as unfairly dismissed if the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that, being a trustee of a relevant occupational pension scheme which relates to his employment, the employee performed (or proposed to perform) any functions as such a trustee.
- (2) In this section "relevant occupational pension scheme" means an occupational pension scheme (as defined in section 1 of the M3Pension Schemes Act 1993) established under a trust.

Commencement Information

II S. 102 wholly in force at 6.10.1996, see Sch. 2 para. 15(1) and S.I. 1996/2514, art. 2

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Marginal Citations

M3 1993 c. 48.

103 Employee representatives. E+W+S

An employee who is dismissed shall be regarded for the purposes of this Part as unfairly dismissed if the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that the employee, being—

- (a) an employee representative for the purposes of Chapter II of Part IV of the M4Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (redundancies) or Regulations 10 and 11 of the M5Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, or
- (b) a candidate in an election in which any person elected will, on being elected, be such an employee representative,

performed (or proposed to perform) any functions or activities as such an employee representative or candidate.

Marginal Citations

M4 1992 c. 52.

M5 S.I. 1981/1794.

VALID FROM 02/07/1999

[F2103A X5 Protected disclosure. E+W+S

An employee who is dismissed shall be regarded for the purposes of this Part as unfairly dismissed if the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that the employee made a protected disclosure.

Editorial Information

X5 The insertion of the new heading "Other dismissals" in Pt. X Ch. I on 1.10.2006 gives rise to a change in the structure of this legislation on SLD which breaks the continuity of historical versions of the existing provisions which are now brought under that new heading.

Textual Amendments

F2 S. 103A inserted (2.7.1999) by 1998 c. 23, s. 5; S.I. 1999/1547, art. 2

104 Assertion of statutory right. E+W+S

- (1) An employee who is dismissed shall be regarded for the purposes of this Part as unfairly dismissed if the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that the employee—
 - (a) brought proceedings against the employer to enforce a right of his which is a relevant statutory right, or

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- (b) alleged that the employer had infringed a right of his which is a relevant statutory right.
- (2) It is immaterial for the purposes of subsection (1)—
 - (a) whether or not the employee has the right, or
 - (b) whether or not the right has been infringed;

but, for that subsection to apply, the claim to the right and that it has been infringed must be made in good faith.

- (3) It is sufficient for subsection (1) to apply that the employee, without specifying the right, made it reasonably clear to the employer what the right claimed to have been infringed was.
- (4) The following are relevant statutory rights for the purposes of this section—
 - (a) any right conferred by this Act for which the remedy for its infringement is by way of a complaint or reference to an industrial tribunal,
 - (b) the right conferred by section 86 of this Act, and
 - (c) the rights conferred by sections 68, 86, 146, 168, 169 and 170 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (deductions from pay, union activities and time off).

VALID FROM 01/11/1998

[F3104A X6 The national minimum wage. E+W+S

- (1) An employee who is dismissed shall be regarded for the purposes of this Part as unfairly dismissed if the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that—
 - (a) any action was taken, or was proposed to be taken, by or on behalf of the employee with a view to enforcing, or otherwise securing the benefit of, a right of the employee's to which this section applies; or
 - (b) the employer was prosecuted for an offence under section 31 of the National Minimum Wage Act 1998 as a result of action taken by or on behalf of the employee for the purpose of enforcing, or otherwise securing the benefit of, a right of the employee's to which this section applies; or
 - (c) the employee qualifies, or will or might qualify, for the national minimum wage or for a particular rate of national minimum wage.
- (2) It is immaterial for the purposes of paragraph (a) or (b) of subsection (1) above—
 - (a) whether or not the employee has the right, or
 - (b) whether or not the right has been infringed,

but, for that subsection to apply, the claim to the right and, if applicable, the claim that it has been infringed must be made in good faith.

- (3) The following are the rights to which this section applies—
 - (a) any right conferred by, or by virtue of, any provision of the National Minimum Wage Act 1998 for which the remedy for its infringement is by way of a complaint to an employment tribunal; and

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(b) any right conferred by section 17 of the National Minimum Wage Act 1998 (worker receiving less than national minimum wage entitled to additional remuneration).]

Editorial Information

X6 The insertion of the new heading "Other dismissals" in Pt. X Ch. I on 1.10.2006 gives rise to a change in the structure of this legislation on SLD which breaks the continuity of historical versions of the existing provisions which are now brought under that new heading.

Textual Amendments

F3 S. 104A inserted (1.11.1998) by 1998 c. 39, **s. 25(1)**; S.I. 1998/2574, art. 2(1), **Sch. 1** (with art. 3)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C2 S. 104A modified (1.4.1999) by 1948 c. 47, s. 3A(5) (as inserted (1.4.1999) by 1998 c. 39, s. 47, Sch. 2 Pt. I para. 3; S.I. 1999/685, art. 2 Sch.)
S. 104A extended (1.4.1999) by 1949 c. 30, s. 3A(4) (as inserted (1.4.1999) by 1998 c. 39, s. 47, Sch. 2 Pt. II para. 13; S.I. 1999/685, art. 2, Sch.)

VALID FROM 05/10/1999

[F4104B Tax credit. E+W+S

- (1) An employee who is dismissed shall be regarded for the purposes of this Part as unfairly dismissed if the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that—
 - (a) any action was taken, or was proposed to be taken, by or on behalf of the employee with a view to enforcing, or otherwise securing the benefit of, a right conferred on the employee by regulations under section 6(2)(a) or (c) of the Tax Credits Act 1999;
 - (b) a penalty was imposed on the employer, or proceedings for a penalty were brought against him, under section 9 of that Act, as a result of action taken by or on behalf of the employee for the purpose of enforcing, or otherwise securing the benefit of, such a right; or
 - (c) the employee is entitled, or will or may be entitled, to working families' tax credit or disabled person's tax credit.
- (2) It is immaterial for the purposes of paragraph (a) or (b) of subsection (1) above—
 - (a) whether or not the employee has the right, or
 - (b) whether or not the right has been infringed.

but, for that subsection to apply, the claim to the right and, if applicable, the claim that it has been infringed must be made in good faith.]

Textual Amendments

F4 S. 104B inserted (5.10.1999) by 1999 c. 10, ss. 7, 20(2), **Sch. 3 para. 3(1)**

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VALID FROM 06/04/2003

104C X7 Flexible working E+W+S

An employee who is dismissed shall be regarded for the purposes of this Part as unfairly dismissed if the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that the employee—

- (a) made (or proposed to make) an application under section 80F,
- (b) exercised (or proposed to exercise) a right conferred on him under section 80G,
- (c) brought proceedings against the employer under section 80H, or
- (d) alleged the existence of any circumstance which would constitute a ground for bringing such proceedings.

Editorial Information

X7 The insertion of the new heading "Other dismissals" in Pt. X Ch. I on 1.10.2006 gives rise to a change in the structure of this legislation on SLD which breaks the continuity of historical versions of the existing provisions which are now brought under that new heading.

105 Redundancy. E+W+S

- (1) An employee who is dismissed shall be regarded for the purposes of this Part as unfairly dismissed if—
 - (a) the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for the dismissal is that the employee was redundant,
 - (b) it is shown that the circumstances constituting the redundancy applied equally to one or more other employees in the same undertaking who held positions similar to that held by the employee and who have not been dismissed by the employer, and
 - (c) it is shown that any of subsections (2) to (7) applies.
- (2) This subsection applies if the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for which the employee was selected for dismissal was that specified in any of paragraphs (a) to (d) of subsection (1) of section 99 (read with subsection (2) of that section) or subsection (3) of that section (and any requirements of the paragraph, or subsection, not relating to the reason are satisfied).
- (3) This subsection applies if the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for which the employee was selected for dismissal was one of those specified in subsection (1) of section 100 (read with subsections (2) and (3) of that section).
- (4) This subsection applies if either—
 - (a) the employee was a protected shop worker or an opted-out shop worker, or a protected betting worker or an opted-out betting worker, and the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for which the employee was selected for dismissal was that specified in subsection (1) of section 101 (read with subsection (2) of that section), or

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- (b) the employee was a shop worker or a betting worker and the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for which the employee was selected for dismissal was that specified in subsection (3) of that section.
- (5) This subsection applies if the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for which the employee was selected for dismissal was that specified in section 102(1).
- (6) This subsection applies if the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for which the employee was selected for dismissal was that specified in section 103.
- (7) This subsection applies if the reason (or, if more than one, the principal reason) for which the employee was selected for dismissal was one of those specified in subsection (1) of section 104 (read with subsections (2) and (3) of that section).
- (8) For the purposes of section 36(2)(b) or 41(1)(b), the appropriate date in relation to this section is the effective date of termination.
- (9) In this Part "redundancy case" means a case where paragraphs (a) and (b) of subsection (1) of this section are satisfied.

106 Replacements. E+W+S

- (1) Where this section applies to an employee he shall be regarded for the purposes of section 98(1)(b) as having been dismissed for a substantial reason of a kind such as to justify the dismissal of an employee holding the position which the employee held.
- (2) This section applies to an employee where—
 - (a) on engaging him the employer informs him in writing that his employment will be terminated on the resumption of work by another employee who is, or will be, absent wholly or partly because of pregnancy or childbirth, and
 - (b) the employer dismisses him in order to make it possible to give work to the other employee.
- (3) This section also applies to an employee where—
 - (a) on engaging him the employer informs him in writing that his employment will be terminated on the end of a suspension of another employee from work on medical grounds or maternity grounds (within the meaning of Part VII), and
 - (b) the employer dismisses him in order to make it possible to allow the resumption of work by the other employee.
- (4) Subsection (1) does not affect the operation of section 98(4) in a case to which this section applies.

107 X8 Pressure on employer to dismiss unfairly. E+W+S

- (1) This section applies where there falls to be determined for the purposes of this Part a question—
 - (a) as to the reason, or principal reason, for which an employee was dismissed,
 - (b) whether the reason or principal reason for which an employee was dismissed was a reason fulfilling the requirement of section 98(1)(b), or
 - (c) whether an employer acted reasonably in treating the reason or principal reason for which an employee was dismissed as a sufficient reason for dismissing him.

Part X – Unfair dismissal

Chapter I – Right not to be unfairly dismissed

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(2) In determining the question no account shall be taken of any pressure which by calling, organising, procuring or financing a strike or other industrial action, or threatening to do so, was exercised on the employer to dismiss the employee; and the question shall be determined as if no such pressure had been exercised.

Editorial Information

X8 The insertion of the new heading "Other dismissals" in Pt. X Ch. I on 1.10.2006 gives rise to a change in the structure of this legislation on SLD which breaks the continuity of historical versions of the existing provisions which are now brought under that new heading.

Status:

Point in time view as at 22/08/1996. This version of this cross heading contains provisions that are not valid for this point in time.

Changes to legislation:

Employment Rights Act 1996, Cross Heading: Fairness is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 08 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations.