UNISON are upping our game in a bid to influence the Labour Party to help improve the lives of public service workers and our families. Dave Prentis, our General Secretary, has said that unions were created not for the easy times, but for the hard times, the likes of which we now face. It has never been more important both to secure a change of government, but also to ensure Labour is elected, adopting policies that connect with all people suffering under austerity at present.

We have always been involved with the Labour Party since the merger in 1993. We are mindful that the party is called the Labour Party precisely because it was formed by the trades unions to counter the dominance of our laws by employers who lobbied hard other parties. We were proud that one of the key achievements of Labour on election in 1997 was the National Minimum Wage, a UNISON policy which the party adopted and brought into law.

The party are now listening to our drive to make this a Living Wage.

UNISON has committed additional resource to this work by committing a named Area Organiser, Jason Hunter (j.hunter@unison.co.uk) to helping build our influence in the party through the Labour Link.

Both are ably supported by Gillian Breeze who provides administrative support and much more to this effort.
UNISON has been heavily involved, and had a great and well received impact at both the National Labour Party Conference in Manchester, and the earlier North West Party Conference in Blackpool.

National Labour Party Conference
The North West Region had 3 delegates as part of the National UNISON delegation, all of whom spoke or raised questions. They are Anne McCormack, of St Helens College Branch, the Regional Chair of Labour Link, Angie Rayner, Stockport Local Government Branch and Liz Cameron, Salford Local Government Branch (Representing our Disabled members self organised group). Each have produced an article below.

UNISON made a big impact on the Conference floor. Our motion on the economy, “Promoting an Alternative to the Coalition Government’s Austerity Programme”, was carried. UNISON delegate, Francesca Massey, (pictured below with Rachel Reeves ) took part in one of the panel discussions introducing the case for the Living Wage.

A key debate was on the Health Service.

Sandra Maxwell (pictured above) a UNISON nurse employed by NHS Direct, introduced the debate by highlighting how ambulance call-outs rise as the telephone helpline is de-skilled to save money. She was supported in the audience by a group of UNISON health workers including Craig Wilde, North West Ambulance Branch Secretary. Andy Burnham agreed to reverse the Coalition reforms, not by yet another reorganisation, but by changing the focus of whatever structure he inherited to an integrated approach to health and care by public delivery, away from private sector involvement. He made the point that privateers stand to gain £20 billion from the Coalition plans, exactly what the government is cutting from the NHS.

UNISON also made impact around the Conference. Our busy stall, promoted the 20th October march and our campaign against police privatisation in the run up to the Police and Crime Commissioner elections. Gillian Breeze, who worked on the stall for most of the week said, “I thoroughly enjoyed working on the stall and meeting UNISON members and CLP delegates from around the country”.

UNISON also were heavily involved in 3 key fringes, 2 focussing on the parlous state of social care and the need to address the insecurity of our elderly, and the de-skilling and exploitation of care workers as attempts are made to provide care on the cheap.

Again, the need for a national care scheme, dismissed by the Tories as a death tax in 2010, will not go away without serious attention.

Dave Prentis also shared a platform with Len McCluskey, General Secretary of Unite, Billy Hayes, General Secretary of CWU and Paul Kenny, General Secretary of GMB. Each outlined their opposition to austerity of the coalition with Dave particularly emphasising the need for Labour to feel the pain of public service workers after 3 years of pay freeze and to constructively support our efforts to secure better pay which will provide vital demand

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for the economy. The share of wages in national income is the lowest since the 1930’s and without spending power at that level, the heavily indebted banks won’t lend to businesses to expand our economy. We can’t wait until 2015 to make our case to the nation that public service workers are hurting, and growth suffers into the bargain.

UNISON North West Delegates speaking and taking part in debates at the

Annie McCormack
Angela Rayner
Elizabeth Cameron

The key issues UNISON covered include:

- **Prosperity and Work**
  - The Economy
  - Public Services

- **Health**

- **Education and Skills**

- **Crime, Justice, Citizenship and Equalities**
  - Policing
  - Equalities

- **Sustainable Communities**
  - Housing
  - Local Government
  - Transport
  - Low Carbon Economy

- **Britain in the World**
  - European Union
  - Nuclear weapons

UNISON has formulated questions for the Labour Party to underline our policy concerns on all the above issues. Please feel free to adapt these questions and themes to make interventions to increase UNISON’s profile within your Constituency Labour Party (CLP).

UNISON produced high quality briefings for delegates on key issues at the Conference. These are attached with this newsletter.

They are also available on the following web site link:

www.unisonnw.org.uk/labourlink
Ed Miliband
Gave a Rousing Speech to Conference Delegates in Manchester and here is what Anne McCormack, Chair of the Regional Labour Link Committee, had to say

His speech was warm, personal, showed leadership, humour and that he was Prime Minister material. There was much in this speech to raise the spirits of Labour Party members and much to encourage voters to cast their votes for the Labour Party at the next election for a fairer, united Britain.

He spoke of our shared values and aims, a commitment to the NHS, a vision of hope to the young, the vulnerable, the sick and the elderly – a new way forward for our country and our delegates welcomed Ed’s commitment to repeal the Health Act. He showed the banks and big business that he wasn’t afraid to take them on but said little to excite us on pay.

The commitment to repealing the Health Act was warmly welcomed but, as we know, the devil is in the detail. He spoke of public/private partnerships, commissioning and other things that we would like to examine in more detail.

He condemned the “rebate for the top” and the “rip-off for everybody else” as the Tories plan a tax cut for millionaires whilst millions suffer and the Lib Dems stand idly by and let it happen.

He exposed the fact that borrowing is rising as the government’s austerity fails. He combined the spirit of fighting fascism, rebuilding the country under Labour in 1945 with the Olympic spirit of today in a bid to cast Labour as the natural party of government and the Tories as a divisive party of the few. He appealed directly to Tory voters to rethink their decision.

The following day, at a UNISON meeting, he followed up by promising to buck the trend and make us a one term opposition, whilst also promising to march and speak at our rally on 20th October.

Clearly there is a long way to go, and many difficult issues to address. However, he certainly confounded the media, and Tory critics, who until very recently saw him as their best hope of clinging to power in 2015. Not any longer.
Conference was an extremely positive and participative event. I felt proud to have been present at the launch of “One Nation”. The whole of conference swelled to the promise of a nation in unity. I was also glad to have been at the Women’s Conference, to see how the equalities arguments developed and were taken into the main conference. Women will be the most likely to raise the issues for disability due to their roles as unpaid carers and for women’s issues such as safety, and domestic violence.

Harriet Harman addressed the Women’s Conference outlining the aims of the Shadow Cabinet to protect the equalities agenda, the interest of women and single parent families.

Health

Shadow Minister for Health Andy Burnham gave an excellent overview, both in workshop sessions and on conference floor, of the Labour position. He reassured us that the Health and Social Care Bill would be repealed, and that integration of health and social care services would enable the services to work together for the ultimate benefit of the person who received them.

“We want care and compassion not money and markets”

The party will publish a monthly NHS check report, that people can feed into. A report was shared which showed the rapid advance of privatisation with services going out to tender. Ambulance services are going out to Arriva bus company. There has been privatising and commissioning of support services.

“Markets deliver fragmentation the future demands integration”

“We will have to deliver a one systems approach to health and community care, a one person approach where councils will

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take a lead role on commissioning being able to link with housing, leisure, all aspects of people’s good health.”

Lucy Powell, candidate in the Manchester Central by-election, spoke of her success working with an Occupational Therapy team. A UNISON challenge made her more aware of the potential dangers of fragmented services and inadequate services of social care providers re assessments and provisions of aids and adaptations.

Equalities

When challenged in the Women’s Conference at the women in trade unions workshop, Yvette Cooper said they would be looking to protect the interests of women, single parent families and carers. Within her conference speech she said,

“You don’t cut crime by cutting the police. We need a new vision for 21st century policing, we need proper checks and balances”

She spoke also of her keenness to continue to support the sexual violence support services. And to support young people with jobs and the issues which were most important to them including increased education in schools in specific areas and finished by boasting,

“Plebs of the world unite, we have nothing to lose but this Government”

I challenged Anna Eagle in a workshop for women and trade unions about the support to trade unions in terms of issues such as the 3 year pay freeze in respect to low paid women and single parents in occupations such as dinner ladies, teaching assistants, carers and cleaners now having to access pay day loans and using food banks for survival. I also asked about the stance they were taking as Shadow Cabinet on issues such as Section 138a questionnaires. She responded by asking for us to send her the intelligence so they can act. Other matters of equality ran throughout the conference.

In the Local Government debate speakers welcomed the number of councils now seeking to pay the living wage as opposed to the minimum wage. However on the ground we know that there is strong feeling that the Labour controlled councils, admittedly hardest hit in the coalition division of cuts, ought to be taking a stronger stand to resist the cuts and save jobs where they can and this was expressed. There was also some feedback on the housing projects which are being built in some areas. However it was declared that more affordable housing is required because despite the work taking place, they “cannot address the mountain of outstanding need”.

We heard from Wales Minister Carwyn Jones, with their Five points for the future; increased access to GPs, increased spending in schools, free prescriptions for all, free bus travel for disabled people and help for people made redundant. They have managed to retain the NHS, boast of nil compulsory redundancies, the living wage, and of a plan to boost the economy, with specific investments to create jobs for young people in their country.

It was an excellent and encouraging conference but, overall, I felt there was too much positive spin on sparse initiatives, and too much harping back to Labour’s past record, however good in some areas. This was a little out of place in an atmosphere of vicious cuts being implemented. Also whilst supporters of the party did not blame Labour for these Con-Dem policies, it was clear that people wanted a clear steer as to how our Labour councils would respond in this current time as well as in the future when we will hopefully help deliver a Labour government once again. We are looking for more action on the planned repeal of legislation in respect of equality and employment rights, as well as better support for trade unions along with a clear position to support us in our actions to lift the pay freeze.

There is work to be done.
Opposing Inequality and Austerity

Austerity and market economics have been portrayed as the only alternative for our future. For our activists to challenge this, UNISON aims to provide political education material to help you to fight back.

You will have seen the “ECONOMYTHS” post cards and various other material since the Coalition was elected.

(Please ask for more if you have not).

Here, with this pack, we enclose for your use “Why Inequality Matters” from the Centre For Labour and Social Studies (CLASS). The booklet describes how Britain has become a more unequal society, but also how this has both contributed to the current economic crisis and how inequality has a corrosive effect on the quality of life and real well being of our citizens in comparison with more equal countries. It also suggests that trade union membership and bargaining strength is critical in keeping society in balance and has both helped Britain fare better than more unequal societies like the USA. However, in as much as union strength has declined, this is at the root of many of our real problems in today’s society. The key issue is that the market can create wealth that could make society better, but only fair and balanced distribution brings this to the benefit of most people.

What You Can Do!

Please get the messages, questions and issues raised in this bulletin discussed in your Branches. Then seek to take these views into your local Constituency Labour Parties. For further advice contact Jason Hunter.
Police and Crime Commissioner Elections

USE YOUR VOTE ON -
15 November 2012

Debbie Turner, Chair of UNISON North West Regional Health Committee says:

"Some health members may wonder what the election of the Police and Crime Commissioner has to do with them. It has a lot to do with them. Whoever is elected will have the power to determine the support that the police are able to give health service workers. All of our public services are linked and depend heavily on each other — the number of police officers out there on the streets and in our communities has a direct impact on the number of incidents we have to deal with in our hospitals and in the community. Cutting back on police officers increases the number of domestic violence incidents, alcohol-related admissions to A&E, assaults as well as limits the support the police can offer front line staff when dealing with aggressive and violent patients and visitors. UNISON health members

Elaine Cotterell, Branch Secretary of Lancashire County Branch says:

"As Branch Secretary I believe that the election is of significant importance; every member of the population is affected by policing. For example, most will agree that we want to live in communities that are safe and that our concerns about our communities are kept safe. The new role of Commissioner will take control of police budgets and have huge influence on how policing is undertaken in Lancashire. Lancashire UNISON has 15,000 members, if every member voted and encouraged family and friends to vote as well they are taking a very large step in ensuring our communities are kept safe.

WHY THIS ELECTION IS NOT JUST A CONCERN FOR OUR POLICE MEMBERS. IT MATTERS TO ALL MEMBERS.

Peter Thorne, Branch Secretary of Burnley Local Government Branch says:

"I'm sure that many of you, like me, doubt the worth of these elections. However like it or not they are going to happen. It is therefore vital that we use our vote to make sure that the Tories don't get in. If they do there will be even more cuts to police and our streets and communities will be less safe as crime will inevitably rise. Even worse if there's a very low turnout the BNP could get in just as they did on the very low turn-out European elections in 2009. So put aside your doubts and use your vote to ensure we get the best possible police commissioner who will do their best to oppose cuts in this vital service".

James Tattersall, Chair of UNISON’s North West Regional Police and Justice Committee says:

"The privatisation of policing has started and must be defeated in order to protect the service supplied to our communities. UNISON believes that it will change the face of UK policing forever. Policing by consent is about to become policing for profit. This privatisation is being pushed by the government on ideological and cost-cutting grounds. Communities who rely on a committed and impartial police service to keep them safe will suffer. Privatisation leads to poorer services as private companies cut back to increase profit. Police forces will lose control of essential services and therefore the ability to react to emergency situations. In the end we could all become victims. That is why it is so important that UNISON members their friends and family all take part in the election of Police and Crime Commissioners and use their vote to make sure that only candidates opposed to privatisation and cuts to the service are elected. The Commissioner when elected will have the power to stop privatisation and therefore protect what is the best policing service in the world.

UNISON ACTIVISTS SPEAK OUT

The front line in the battle against police cuts

Why I am getting involved in the Police Crime Commissioner Elections

UNISON is active everywhere to defeat politically driven cuts and privatisation. However, the most marginal area is Lancashire. If pro-cuts candidates are defeated in Lancashire in the PCC elections, and again in the County Council elections in May, this will provide a vital spring board to change the Government at the next election. There are 11 key marginal constituencies which could see the coalition driven from power. Here are some comments from our activists in Lancashire.