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The Newsletter for all UNISON Stewards and Activists in the North West Region

Autumn 2012

Austerity isn't working! Defend public services!

Join us on October 20th



It's tragic. A global financial crisis precipitated by the greed of fat cats and bankers has led to world-wide recession. And instead of those who caused the problem being made to pay, ordinary people like you and me are forced to suffer austerity measures. "If only you take your medicine it'll all come good" they say as the rich boys' tax rates get cut while our taxes go up.

Unemployment continues to rise and there are over a million unemployed young people. Here in the North West 149,000 young people are not in employment, education or training. In

other words 1 in 5 do not have work, a school or college place or any kind of training. This figure has risen since the Coalition came to power when it was 134,000. Young people who have already been attacked through the withdrawal of the Education Maintenance Allowance and steep increases in college tuition fees. The real prospect of a lost generation is before us. If you are under 25 you'll no longer be entitled to housing benefit while the prospect of getting on the housing ladder ebbs ever further away.

Then there are our public services. The Tories are carving them up and forcing them to be sold piecemeal to those who would profit from a child's education or an elderly person's sickness.

Whether it is Free Schools set up

by creationists or expensive PFI deals to pay for your hospitals it's paid for from your taxes – public money and assets being handed over to private firms.

And while the bankers continue to get their ridiculous pay and bonuses ordinary folk get less and less. A couple with two children need to earn £36,800 to have a decent standard of living according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. One in four families in the UK now lacks a decent standard of living. A report from Save the Children found that 42% of Manchester's young children live below the poverty line with 1000s of families living on less than £100 a week. In some of the most deprived areas of Liverpool one third of children are living in poverty. This is increasingly

becoming of the experience of many families across the North West.

Two children in every classroom arrive at school on an empty stomach because their families cannot afford food. A recent study by Kids Company and Netmums said they were seeing a marked increase in responsible parents who simply cannot afford to have food in the house. Many families are turning to food banks, with Liverpool Central food bank finding its number of donations doubled between January and June with 1,881 people being fed. Too many children were not only on the breadline but way way below it campaigners stated.

At the same time public

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Sixth Form College Pay 2012/13

UNISON has submitted a claim for support staff to the Sixth Form Colleges employers for 2012/13.

The claim calls for:

- A substantial increase on all salary scales with a minimum increase of £250 for all staff
- A review of the support staff salary spine
- An additional day's leave for all support staff

UNISON is meeting with the Sixth Form College Forum on 19 September to discuss the claim and we will report any developments.

National Representatives for Sixth Form College Staff

The nomination period for national representatives for sixth form colleges to the UNISON Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges Forum will open shortly. There are three reserved seats on the committee for representatives of sixth form colleges.

To be eligible, you must be a UNISON member employed in a sixth form college. If you are interested in standing for these posts or would like further information, contact Ben Thomas, UNISON National Officer for Sixth Form Colleges on 020 7121 5270 or b.thomas@unison.co.uk

Austerity isn't working

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funding to support Prince Charles rose by 11% in the last financial year taking the taxpayers contribution to almost £2.2million. The accounts also show that the Prince of Wales received £18.3m from the Duchy of Cornwall – the estate given to the heir to the throne to provide him with a living. The Prince also took on more staff. He now employs two valets, a butler, an equerry, a master of the household, three chauffeurs, and ten house managers.

This when thousands of disabled workers are forced to take strike action against government plans to close the Remploy factories. Half of the 54 factories employing 2,800 people face closure and a further nine plants are subject to further investigation. Just in the North West alone five sites have closed their doors affecting 278 workers.

Not bad enough for you yet? Each week the Tory right wing comes out with further plans. They want you to pay for some NHS services but at the same time are wasting £10 billion a year on needless health service competition. The winter fuel allowance and free bus pass for better off pensioners could be axed if Tory MP Nick Boles, a close ally of David Cameron gets his way. But at least someone's doing OK. Poundland saw its profits rise 26.5%. The company is owned by the private equity firm Warburg Pincus and hopes to open 60 new stores next year.

It should make you angry. It should make you furious when you increasingly see collections of food so that charities can feed the rising numbers of the destitute.

And it should make you incandescent with rage when you realise that none of it is necessary. The country remains one of the richest in the world. The level of debt is not even high by historical levels. And why you should want to pay it off in a couple of years when you could easily spread it out over a couple of decades – as governments have always done is simply economic masochism.

Tax rates for the rich actually went down in the last budget! What about the billions we are to waste on replacing Trident nuclear submarines? And what about the increasing number of economists who are urging the Tories to go for growth and investment. People in good jobs pay taxes and help the

“ October 20th gives us the perfect opportunity... to get them to change course. ”

local economy by having cash to buy goods and services from local shops and businesses. Unemployed people or those on the breadline don't. It isn't rocket science.

We have to tell the coalition that austerity isn't working. And October 20th gives us the perfect opportunity. Branches, stewards and activists must redouble their efforts to get members on this march. With the coalition wobbling over a double dip recession and obvious splits beginning to appear between the Tories and their Lib Dem allies a massive display of public anger can get them to change course. We can win this fight and indeed we must win this fight if all we hold dear isn't to be thrown away. See you in London on the 20th!

Talking 'bout My Generation

By Chloe Morris

According to the Government Office of National Statistics, the first half of this year saw unemployment rates among 18 – 24 year olds rise by more than a third, with the North of England being the hardest hit. For many this was just another depressing statistic in a raft of bleak forecasts, but for me, my friends and young people across Britain it was yet another slap in the face.

At the very time we should be planning our future and respective career, we are facing the stark economic reality of austerity measures. In a recent article outgoing TUC general secretary, Brendan Barber identified that “young people in particular are struggling to get their careers off the ground” and he’s right. The number of people under 25 who are neither working or in full time education has risen again. There are now over 1.5 million young people in the UK out of work. So what does the future hold for us, the next generation?

Barber’s view is that “Ministers must step up job support, before unemployment starts rising again, otherwise help will come too late, for too many people”. What’s more even the CBI appears to have some sympathy with this view suggesting that the Government’s work programme must be developed as a priority for job seekers.

Yet in August this year when the figures were released I and many other students were nervously awaiting exam results. We had to endure another insult, listening to Michael Gove making out GCSEs are now far too easy. You would half expect him to suggest using the

GCSEs next year as an entrance exam to nursery school! All this sits against a backdrop of constantly portraying young people, as nothing more than hooded, worthless hooligans who appear to be responsible for everything from the banking crisis to the bad weather.

One young person I met said, “You need experience to get a job but you need a job to gain experience and you just can’t afford to do voluntary work on Job Seekers Allowance”. Other young people I’ve interviewed questioned the value of apprenticeships’ despite the low pay it is not the money that bothers them but the stigma that an apprentice carries within the office environment.

They believe that they are seen by their colleagues as not a genuine member of the workforce; often being ignored by unions and colleagues alike. Many talk about the need for higher education but as the TUC points out young people are still awaiting a replacement for the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) to support them through their studies. This coupled with the increases in university fees are preventing many young people progressing to university and fulfilling their potential. I’ve actually heard stories where parents were considering which child to choose to go to university.

In today’s economy we repeatedly hear how important it is to have an educated and adaptable workforce; yet Government policies appear inconsistent with this goal. Since the coalition has been in power they have eliminated the future jobs fund (which the Governments poverty adviser described as “one of the

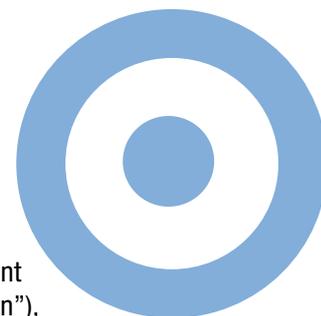
most precious things the last government was involved in”), abolished the EMA and destroyed the connexions service.

EMAs are vital. The allowances gives my generation an independence; one young person I spoke to said “even though both my parents are employed in full time jobs their pay has been reduced by this government and their bills are increasing which doesn’t leave enough to send me to college. If I had my own income or grant I know I could make it work”.

Andrew McGregor one of UNISON’s North West connexions stewards expressed real concern about how young people receive help with careers and education choices. He said “we must not forget that all young people need help. The cuts that have destroyed the connexions service have been insatiable at the very time they are needed the most”.

By adopting this approach this government has deliberately made the lives of young people even more difficult. It’s a struggle for ordinary young people to enter further education, find a job or secure a future for themselves, leaving my generation feeling like an unwanted burden on society.

Whilst I’m obviously relieved that perfect strangers are not running up and embracing me just because I wear a jacket with a hood it would be good if we could be viewed without suspicion and fear, treated with respect and given a chance to succeed. That is why I will be marching on the 20th October because we all deserve a “future that works”.



Police and Crime Commissioner Elections

15th November 2012

Use your voice to make a difference!
Support public service candidates for
Police Commissioner

IMPORTANT CHANGES – YOUR CHANCE TO HAVE A SAY

*The Government will soon overhaul the way crime and policing is tackled across the North West. The safety of our families and each other is of course of enormous importance. At a time of severe cuts in policing it is vital that working people have a strong voice. In November, there will be elections to choose Police and Crime Commissioners in Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Cheshire and Cumbria. UNISON will be supporting candidates who oppose the Government's austerity and cuts. **Over the following pages we explain why and how you can get involved.** >*

'Water is a Human Right' Campaign



Campaigners across Europe are seeking to establish that access to clean drinking water and safe sanitation are human rights - regardless of who they are provided by.

One million signatures are needed for this 'European Citizens' Initiative' to force the European Parliament and the European Commission to consider legislating on this important issue. Union activists,

environmentalists, civil society groups and academics are all involved in the campaign that aims to collect over one million signatures from across all 27 EU countries by May 2013.

This campaign is important to the UK, as water poverty here is increasing. There is a growing amount of debt owed by consumers who can't afford to pay their water charges. The UK launch of

the petition took place during our National Conference.

Pictured above are UNISON activists from the Environment Agency and United Utilities branches with colleagues from WaterAid showing their support for the *epsu* 'Water and Sanitation is a Human Right' campaign.

**To sign the petition go to
www.right2water.eu**

Police and Crime Commissioner Elections

15th November 2012

YOUR VOTE will make a difference – use it!

Although UNISON has been opposed to the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners, this presents a fantastic opportunity to mobilise our members, their families and their friends in order to elect the best candidate for police staff and the services they provide to the public at large.

In the North West, the Regional Labour Link Forum is keen to back to Labour candidates who support retaining police staff terms and conditions and who oppose privatisation of the police force. We support candidates who are committed to protecting police staff jobs in the face of the 20% cuts imposed on the police service by the coalition government.

UNISON is recommending that members opt for a postal vote for the election, rather than having to trudge to a ballot station in the dark, cold and wet evening, to further increase turnout.

Why vote?

The ability to influence the policies of your local police force should not go unmissed, and if you want just one reason to make sure you vote for the best candidate, look at UNISON's Stop Police Privatisation campaign.

Over the past few months, the threat of privatisation has reared its ugly head amongst a number of our police forces, even though we are aware of its failure.

As Neville Lawrence said at our national conference this year, "It will be a disaster... if you privatise the police force the government is no longer responsible. It won't be about crime any more, it will be about

making money."

"If you go to the police and they're a private company, they won't listen to you, just like if you go to a bank and ask for money – they can just say no. At the moment, the government is ultimately responsible."

"We want the police to be accountable to the public and not a fly-by-night private conglomerate."

You only have to look at the Olympics and the G4S fiasco to realise what can go wrong if private companies are left in charge of security.

Are you worried about the government's cuts to your police force? Concerned that policing could be privatised? Make your voice heard!

Government cuts will mean:

- 16,000 fewer police officers.
- 18,000 fewer police staff – (police community support officers, 999 call takers, forensic experts, etc.).

The government also wants to privatise policing to allow private companies to make a profit from keeping your community safe.

We believe our members will object to these changes, but we as activists can do something to make a difference. We can circulate UNISON material, talk to members and get them to vote.

- Urge members to register for a postal vote today at www.aboutmyvote.co.uk OR advise them to contact their local electoral registration office.
- Talk to members and urge them to vote, and get their friends and family to vote.
- Visit unison.org.uk/stoppoliceprivatisation to find out more.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE: VOTE FOR PUBLIC SERVICES ON 15 NOVEMBER 2012.

SIGN UP FOR A POSTAL VOTE!

The election for Police and Crime Commissioners will be held on Thursday 15th November 2012. You will return home after a long day at work, sort the tea, spend time with family and then enjoy a well-earned sit down after a long day. Gazing out of the window on a dark dreary night, you may well be reluctant to go out and vote in a new, election which you may resent the Government imposing upon you anyway. Or perhaps you have arrived at work on the afternoon shift, and have forgotten to vote in the morning. Will you have time to make it before the polls close?

WHY NOT MAKE AN APPLICATION TO VOTE BY POST?

Why not avoid these problems and sign up for a postal vote? You may obtain copies of the postal vote application form for you to pass out to members from the regional office. Members must return these to the local electoral registration officer at the town hall in the district where they live. Deadlines for postal application differ slightly in each council area, but if you want a postal vote you should register as soon as possible.

Police and Crime Commissioner Elections 15th November 2012

INTRODUCING YOUR LABOUR CANDIDATES SUPPORTED BY UNISON

LANCASHIRE

Supporting *Clive Grunshaw*, your Labour candidate

Protecting communities, fighting crime – Labour PCC candidates call for plan to cut crime, not Lancashire’s police.

Clive Grunshaw, Lancashire Labour’s Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) candidate has vowed he won’t stand by and let Tory and Liberal Democrats become cheerleaders for police cuts.

The election for Lancashire’s first PCC takes place on November 15. Clive is calling on the Government to change course as police numbers have fallen to the lowest for nearly a decade.

Home Office figures show that there are 326 fewer officers on Lancashire streets since March 2010; with the majority of the officers lost coming from 999, neighbourhood and traffic response units - the officers we

rely on in an emergency.

Clive Grunshaw, Lancashire Labour’s PCC candidate, says “People from Lancashire want to see police on their streets, but these figures show the Tory-led Government’s cuts mean over 300 officers have already been lost from our local communities, with more cuts to come.

“Crime fell by 43 per cent with Labour according to the British Crime Survey and I’ll be campaigning hard to ensure we continue to cut crime, not police in Lancashire. I’m calling on the Government to think again to save the vital police officer jobs that



protect our community.”

Please do everything you can to make sure people send a message to this out-of-touch Government on November 15.

ABOVE: Lancashire PCC candidate *Clive Grunshaw* (right) – together with Labour’s Shadow Policing Minister, *David Hanson MP* (front left) meet crime prevention group members in *Deepdale, Preston*.

CHESHIRE

Supporting *John Stockton*, your Labour candidate



The role of the PCC is new. It will be the first time that an elected individual will take responsibility for ensuring the delivery of an effective and efficient Police Service. They will need to listen to the views of local communities, set the direction for policing, work with

other agencies to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, set the budget and should they fail to deliver they will then be held to account by the electorate. This is a new challenge and one which must be addressed within an age of austerity and with diminishing resources.

In Cheshire there is already a strong history of effectiveness and efficiency. Police Officers and Staff have consistently risen to the demands of a reduced budget, without any reduction in standards. I recognise that many have already been affected by past challenges and have continued to deliver a quality service.

As the PCC, I pledge to work in partnership with the Constabulary,

including staff associations and unions, in order to consolidate and improve on existing delivery. Difficult decisions will have to be made around the budget, but it will be through consultation and in partnership.

I am not opposed to the utilisation of specialist skills which may be found in the private sector, they can be a valuable resource for advice/guidance when skill and/or capacity is lacking in the Constabulary, but I pledge that they will not be used for the delivery of services. I am implacably opposed to private delivery and will seek to ensure that the public service ethos remains at the forefront for the delivery of policing in Cheshire.

GREATER MANCHESTER

Supporting *Tony Lloyd*, your Labour candidate

Greater Manchester will elect its first Police and Crime Commissioner in November who will set the agenda for the police and for fighting and reducing crime. Few things matter more to you and your family and that is why your vote matters. Without your support we could wake up on 16th November to discover that a Tory, a rich maverick or even a covert BNP supporter had won and was going to run and ruin our police.

Labour's candidate is Tony Lloyd MP who will be a strong, experienced Commissioner. Tony is a good friend of UNISON with a record of doing what is right for his constituents and fighting for

the best for our area.

Tony will:

- Campaign against government police cuts (Greater Manchester has lost more police officers than anywhere else).
- Make sure that the anti-social neighbour and the local job know that the police will stop them from terrorising our communities.
- Listen to and speak up for our local communities and defend our neighbourhood policing - it's the best way to cut crime.
- Make sure that victims of crime are put at the centre of events from early



investigation, kept in touch with progress and treated with the dignity they should expect.

Tony told UNISON, "I am determined to stand up for Greater Manchester because, like you, I want to see our police cutting crime, not this government cutting our police."

CUMBRIA Supporting *Patrick Leonard*, your Labour candidate

I'm proud to be Labour's candidate for Cumbria's first Police & Crime Commissioner. I've never stood for election before but I couldn't just stand back and watch this Tory-led government do their worst to our police service. As someone who has worked in the public services for over 30 years, I know how the police work and I've seen first-hand the challenges they face. Their jobs are being made even harder by the budget cuts handed down by this government.

Cumbria Police faces losing more than 120 officers over the next few

years. This is a huge blow to a small force covering a big area. In addition we have lost skilled and dedicated support staff. You don't cut crime by cutting police.

As Commissioner, I would fight these cuts and do what I can to protect our police service. Unlike the Tories, I won't hand our policing over to private companies. I will bring forward measures to make sure victims of anti-social behaviour get a swift and strong response. Cumbria deserves a police service that protects our communities and fights crime. If you elect me as your

Labour Police & Crime Commissioner this is exactly what you will get.

Like my page at www.facebook.com/Leonard4Cumbria. My Twitter account is [Leonard4Cumbria](https://twitter.com/Leonard4Cumbria). The campaign phone number is 07551 090 867



MERSEYSIDE Supporting *Jane Kennedy*, your Labour candidate



UNISON is in the front line of our public services. Civilian staff in the police are no strangers to the savage cuts being inflicted by the government. Those staff need someone who understands the value of their contribution to

the community. I am the Labour Party candidate for this new role on Merseyside and if I am elected I will:

- Stand up for communities against the Tory/Lib Dem cuts to policing and the loss of over 16,000 police officers in England.
- Keep police and PCSOs on the beat with neighbourhood policing, not hand it over to private companies.
- Target gun, gang and violent crime as a top priority.
- Back a strong and swift response to anti-social behaviour because victims

should get a response within 24 hours.

- Be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. Jane will establish a strong and effective Merseyside partnership with police, local people and councils to tackle and prevent crime.

I will work tirelessly to defend the communities of Merseyside from the impact of spending cuts on crime & disorder. I hope that all UNISON members will remember to use their vote in November.'

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.

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.

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 neighbourhoods are taken seriously. 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.

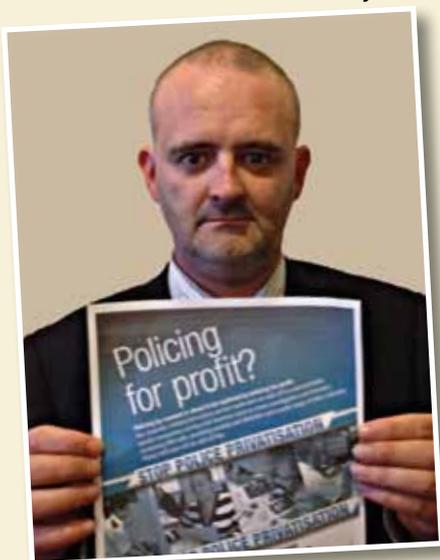
Debbie Turner, Chair of UNISON North West Regional Health Committee says:

“ 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 need to use their vote to elect the candidate who supports NHS staff in dealing with the effects of crime day in, day out and who supports the close working relationship of all public sector workers”.

Ann McCormack, Chair of North West Regional Labour Link adds her support by saying:

“ I believe it is important to vote for the right person in the elections for Police & Crime Commissioner as this powerful role must be accountable to the people the police serve. This current coalition government is hell bent on privatising our public services and this is a recipe for disaster. We must be able to trust our police officers and be confident that they serve the public and not some private, unaccountable employer.





Here's our review of what was agreed at this year's National Conference – and what you need to do to help take things forward.

Motion 5 Bullying in the workplace

Conference asked the NEC to work with national self-organised groups (SOGs) and Learning & Organising Services to make sure that training courses and resources are provided to help members recognise the signs of bullying and the actions to take. Branches need to contact their employers and ensure that bullying and harassment workplace policies are in place – and stuck to. Conference also agreed that every branch should have a dedicated steward or branch officer responsible for supporting members with these issues. Who is yours?

12 Campaigning against government pay policy

Branches need to prioritise the pay campaign. This includes taking part in research studies and case studies on the impact of pay freezes and regional pay. We need to take part in the forthcoming high profile campaign against pay freezes, pay caps and regional pay and engage all

our members in this. We also need to start getting across to members and the general public the concept of the Living Wage – wages high enough to prevent in-work poverty and secure a decent living standard without the need to claim in-work benefits.

20 Devolution and constitutional change

This sets out a work plan for the NEC to ensure sufficient resources are available to support the union's work in the devolved nations and regions of the UK.

21 Disability Leave

Distinguishing between general sickness absence and absence related to a disability is important if disabled members are not to be discriminated against in promotion, references or even selection for redundancy. UNISON has produced guidance on disability leave including how to negotiate workplace policies – including a model agreement for branches to use. Those branches yet to

negotiate disability leave policies with their employers are urged to do so.

22 Campaigning for a Living Wage

Branches need to make sure that the Living Wage is included in any pay claim at local level. The current hourly rate (outside London) is £7.20 per hour. Aside from that we need to make sure we are involved in the general campaign work to get the Living Wage widely recognised – including in all contractors and their subcontractors. Conference agreed to support branches who lobbied shareholder meetings, embarrassed companies in the press, or who took lawful



industrial action to achieve the Living Wage. Part of the campaign is to influence Labour Party policy by lobbying councillors and MPs. Make sure you do.

32 Austerity and Devolution

Another motion – this time from Northern Ireland Region requesting the union nationally makes sure that the union's structures and resources are such that we are able to support members in all areas of the UK.

33 North South Divide – the disproportionate impact of government cuts

Here in the North West 140,000 full time equivalent job losses are expected as a result of the devastating way

that Government spending plans affect us so more than they do the south. That's about 1 in every 20 of the entire regional workforce. While Manchester and Liverpool councils faced cuts of 20% in other "Shire" regions the cuts were more like 3%. Over £5 billion will be removed from the North West economy alone. Similar problems face the North East. Conference agreed that we needed to promote our alternative economic strategy – real investment in quality jobs. The motion restated our commitment to opposing regional pay deals, defending employment rights such as trade union facility time, campaigning for the living wage and supporting apprenticeships and training for young people.

34 Women and the Cuts

Women's unemployment stands at a 23 year high with 1.09 million women unemployed. Vital roles in public services are carried out by women who find themselves facing a triple whammy – job losses, drastic cuts to benefits and services and a care gap with women being expected to plug the gap of caring for older or sick relatives. Conference called on us to raise the awareness of people generally about the effect the cuts are having on women. Branches need to make sure they know how to use Equality Impact Needs Assessments as a tool for challenging inequality in cuts to services. Conference also urged branches to form Public Services Alliances with community groups, other

continues overleaf...

unions and the voluntary sector in their local areas.

35 Young, gifted Black and unemployed

While a shocking 20% of white youngsters are now unemployed the figure for young Black people is 48%. Conference agreed that we needed to do much more work with young Black people not least in campaigning with them to defend youth services and calling for local job creation. Branches need to involve themselves in the initiatives of the NEC, Black Members' Committee and Young Members' Forum.

38 End Child Poverty

The UK has one of the highest rates of child poverty in the industrialised world. Nearly four million children in the UK will grow up in poverty and a recent study by the Institute for Fiscal Studies shows that the number of children living in absolute poverty will increase by 500,000 by 2015. Branches will need to join in the union's campaign and work with groups such as Child Poverty Action Group and the End Child Poverty Campaign to end child poverty by 2020.



49 Local Government Services

Savage cuts, outsourcing, redundancies and trashed services. We see devastated local communities and alarming rates of youth unemployment. The

vulnerable and the poorest are hardest hit. Of all the cuts councils are taking the biggest hit – and councils in the poorest areas are being hit the most. The North West is one of those areas. Meanwhile the workers who remain are having to take on more and more, covering for deleted posts while suffering a three year pay freeze.

Services are under massive strain with the adult social care system heading for complete crisis. Add in privatisation and new laws where any Tom Dick and global multinational can demand to run your services and it's a perfect storm.

Branches need to circulate UNISON's Alternative Budget details ever more widely. Use it in your newsletters and websites. Write to local papers with it and pass it on to other community groups with whom you should be campaigning. The truth is that the money is there – it's how we spend it that matters. The public and our members need to face the truth that we have been conned with all the talk of austerity and deficits.

55 The Welfare Bill and attacks on housing benefit

Some of our poorest and most vulnerable citizens need to claim housing benefit to keep a roof over their heads. Far from being scroungers the vast majority are working people with low paid jobs. They don't even get the benefit themselves – it's used to pay their landlord for the rent. The government's

introduction of a cap on housing benefit will see people falling into arrears, driven into debt or being made homeless. Local housing advice and support services are also under threat. Branches need to make sure that people understand what is happening and work to keep housing functions under council control where possible.

59 Cuts and the Black member experience

The cuts to public services have directly affected Black people and the most vulnerable in society. Branches need to make sure that their employers carry out Equality Impact Assessments especially when services are being reduced. Black members in branches are also encouraged to get involved in Self Organised Groups at branch and regional levels. We need to increase the participation of Black members in our campaigns against cuts.

62 Police and Crime Commissioners

We need to gear up to let people know about the Police and Crime commissioner elections in November this year. See elsewhere in this issue for details.

83 Elder Abuse

It is shocking that nearly half a million older people in the UK suffer from some form of abuse—physical, psychological, sexual or financial. This abuse can happen anywhere but what is shocking is that a quarter of all this abuse

occurs in residential care homes—the very places older people ought to feel safe. Conference agreed that adult protection should be given the same status as child protection. We need to build a culture where high quality support is provided equitably, where carers and support workers are properly rewarded and where providers embrace the human rights of those they care for.

85 Stop Disability Hate Crime

Nearly nine out of every ten people with learning disabilities have been attacked or harassed in the last 12 months. Nearly one in three receives harassment every week. One in four has actually been assaulted. This is a disgrace. Branches need to do all they can to raise the profile of this awful situation by working with councils and others. We also need to help and support disabled members report disability hate crime.

86 Opposing the Far Right

Just because the BNP has been overwhelmingly beaten in recent local elections does not mean the battle against the far right has been won. We need to continue our anti-racism activities. We've seen the poisonous activities of the EDL at first hand, most recently in demos in Hyde and Rochdale. Conference agreed we needed to build community coalitions, lobby councils and the police to stop BNP and EDL rallies and produce publicity exposing the far right and its anti-Muslim rhetoric. We want

social justice for all not the poisonous divisive hatred of the far right.

91 Workfare is unfair

The government's work experience programme for 16-24 year olds who have been unemployed for more than three months sees them "encouraged" to do unpaid work experience for companies such as Poundland. Placements last up to two months and the young people remain on Job Seekers Allowance (£56.25 per week for under 25s) rather than the National Minimum Wage. That works out at £1.87 per hour on a 30 hour week. Payment of expenses such as travel costs is entirely at the discretion of the companies involved. JSA can be withdrawn from those who leave after the first week or who do not attend. Conference agreed that we needed to publicise the issue. Branches will need to raise the issue in relevant workplaces and HQ is to produce comprehensive advice on how to go about this.

118 Tamil Solidarity

Conference heard about the aftermath of the Sri Lankan civil war where hundreds of thousands of Tamils were rounded up into detention camps where horrific conditions and extreme brutality continue to exist. On top of this the Sri Lankan government is also clamping down on basic democratic rights throughout the country.

Trade unionists, journalists and political activists have been killed or "disappeared". Branches are encouraged to

raise the issue with members and invite speakers from Tamil support groups to meetings.



129 Defeating the Con Dems – a union strategy

The millions of words spoken at Conference can hide the stark reality of the situation before us. Only by campaigning and leading our membership – locally and regionally against cuts in jobs and services can we begin to defeat the attacks upon us.

Amongst other things we must give priority to building our influence politically at local and regional level. Make sure our voice is heard when Labour Party candidates are selected. Build the link between the union and the Labour Party.

Take part and develop political education programmes for ordinary members so they can see that politics are important and that things can be changed through involvement and activism.

Composite A: Organising

Strong workplace organisation in every workplace is vital and part of that involves identifying new stewards and leading more members to get more involved in our work. By using the branch assessment process branches need to work with the region in developing achievable priorities, targets and actions for the year ahead. Amongst other things

branches need to make sure they have a recruitment plan which outlines the recruitment area to be prioritised, the service area and the resources needed while taking note of shift patterns and the location of potential members, setting achievable timescales and identifying who is involved.

Composite B: Pensions

Conference agreed to campaign for decent pensions for all not least those such as women, disabled and Black members who generally end up disproportionately affected by changes to the schemes. Conference agreed to highlight the detrimental effects of the increased state retirement age. On a general note branches could do worse than make sure they continue to promote scheme membership to the workforce as a whole. Whatever the outcome of the various scheme negotiations public service pensions remain cracking value and if nothing else their long-term viability depends on as many workers as possible joining the schemes.

Composite C: Health and Safety

The coalition government is busy dismantling health and safety law. Conference agreed to oppose attempts to weaken workers' protection. Branches need to play their part in the campaign to show that health and safety is not a silly burden on business and profits but a real protection to prevent the death and serious injury of those who work.

Composite D: Economy

Branches need to create publicity events to highlight the local effects of coalition policies and publicise UNISON's alternative strategy. We need to give members the confidence to campaign against privatisation and compulsory redundancies while battling for greater investment in learning, health and well-being and a better work-life balance.

Composite E: Income inequality

Currently the gap between the rich and poor is the greatest it's been since World War II. 50% of the UK population own just 1% of the wealth. There are plenty of facts to show that the rich are getting richer at an ever faster pace. Unequal societies create all manner of social problems. Branches need to highlight the problems of wealth inequality in our campaigning work and argue for the Living Wage whenever we can.

Composite F: Public Services

The coalition wants to reduce the size of state. It wants to do away with whole areas of collective public provision and provide what little is left by poorly paid privately employed workers, by volunteers or those not paid anything at all such as long-term unemployed. And when the budget deficit is cleared there's no going back to what we have now. Branches need to support our wider campaigning by trying to get the message

continues overleaf...

across to our members and the wider public that none of this is actually necessary. There is an alternative.

Composite G: Housing

Changes to Housing Benefit rules will mean up to 800,000 households being priced out of their own communities and away from their jobs and schools. Not UNISON's figures but those of the Chartered Institute of Housing! Lower rent areas will see an influx of families putting extreme stress on schools, medical and social services. Then the Tories want to do away with subsidies for building houses for low income families, end security of tenure and raise the rents. That there are 4.5 million people on council waiting lists tells its own story.

For those wanting to buy their own house there's also a crisis with the average age of a first time buyer now 37 years old. At the same time changes to housing benefit mean those under 35 years old only get help to live in a room in a shared house.

We must build local alliances and campaigns to highlight these terrible truths.

Composite H: Young People

A million youth on dole.

Services badly cut. EMA axed. University fees sky high. Low numbers of apprenticeships. Time to fight back!

Composite I: TU, Equality and Employment Rights

Despite having the most restrictive laws on unions in western Europe the Tories still want more. They've a lengthy list including no-fault sackings, fees for tribunals, reduced notice for redundancies and attacks on your rights when your job is bought out by another firm (TUPE). Conference agreed to mount a major campaign in which we all have a part to play.

Composite J: Trade Union Representatives and Composite K: Tory Attack Group

Attacks on facility time by right wing front organisations such as the Tax payers Alliance and the so-called Trade Union Reform Group. Conference agreed we must stand up for ourselves. When asked you'll need to make sure you write to MPs, Councillors and the rest – armed with the excellent briefings from the TUC that show that in fact facility time actually saves the tax payer money. Fewer

dismissals, higher retention rates, fewer tribunal cases and reduced workplace injuries all stemming from the work of grass roots activists. Where branches haven't got facility time agreements written down there's no better time than now to contact region for help in negotiating them.

Composite L: Palestine

After visiting Palestine in 2006 Willie Madisha the former President of South Africa's Congress of Trade Unions said "the horrendous dehumanisation of Black South Africans (during Apartheid) is a Sunday picnic compared with what I saw... happening to the Palestinian people". Conference agreed that recent developments in Palestine including the security wall, separate roads, imprisonment of Palestinian youth, the continually expanding internationally illegal settlements now actually amount to apartheid. Branches should affiliate to the Palestine Solidarity

Campaign and we must use our influence to stop our pension money being invested in companies who assist the illegal occupation. None of us should buy goods produced in the Israeli settlements.

Composite N: National Health Service

Longer waiting lists, more profits for private firms, another major upheaval in the organisation and a less equal health service are certain to result from the government's NHS reforms. And at the same time the reforms ignore the lack of resources for mental health services, the appalling state of long-term care for the elderly, spiralling PFI costs and the increasing postcode lottery for many procedures. Get involved in the campaign against cuts and privatisation whether you work in the NHS or not. **Most importantly use the 20th October march and rally in London as a focal point. Get working on those NHS placards and banners now!**

March for a future that works in London 20 October



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Thanks this issue to: Ashley Bramwell, Elaine Cotterell, Steve Gwilt, Jason Hunter, Judith Holt, John Jones, Ann McCormack, Chloe Morris, Lynne Morris, James Tattersall, Peter Thorne, Debbie Turner and anyone else who contributed in any way – we couldn't do it without you! If you have anything to say, then write to us c/o the Communications & Media Team at the Regional Centre, UNISON North West, Arena Point, 1 Hunts Bank, Manchester, M3 1UN or e-mail to nwmedia@unison.co.uk