Tories Attack Unions

The Tory Government’s Trade Union Bill – condemned by Unions as the “most sustained and partisan attack on workers’ rights in 30 years” - has passed its second reading in the House of Commons.

This reading proposes further restrictions to those announced in the Conservative manifesto and include proposals to criminalise picketing, cut time off for trade union representatives to carry out their duties and introduce measures to prevent union subscriptions being deducted from wages.

And not only that: If the Government get away with it – and the bill becomes law – strike action in public services will effectively end.

The Government claim that the measures “balance” the rights between workers and businesses - but there is already a huge imbalance weighted strongly in favour of employers.

The Tories’ far-reaching plans will shift the balance even further and make it increasingly difficult for workers to have decent pay and conditions.

The plans have been criticised by MPs from all parties while the Regulatory Policy Committee - an independent body appointed by the Government to verify the costs and savings of proposed changes to businesses – has declared the Government’s proposals as “not fit for purpose”.

Further details of what the bill will mean are contained overleaf.

Leeds City Council staff on strike in 2014 –
The Tories want to make sure this doesn’t happen again

Inside this issue

P2   Trade Union Bill
P3   Living Wage
     General Secretary Election
P4   Why we need Stewards
P5   Recruit a friend
     “There for you”
     Essential Legal Cover
P6   The impact of Cuts
P7   News in Brief
     Leeds Citizens
P8   AGM
     Redundancy cap
Tories Attack Unions

Continued from p1….

What will happen if the Trade Union Bill is passed?

**Strike ballots will require a much higher turnout and majority**

All strike ballots will need to meet much higher thresholds. Those public services deemed ‘important’ (e.g. health and education) will require a turn-out of at least 50% of members with 40% of the entire membership voting in favour. On a 50% turnout, this means that 80% of those voting, most vote in favour of action.

When considering whether this is fair, you might bear in mind that over 75% of registered voters didn’t vote Conservative in the last election, yet we still got them. And this nasty bill.

**Tough picketing rules will become even tougher**

Unions will have to give advance notice of picketing plans on social media and meet harsh regulations concerning picket supervisors.

Failure to notify the Police of who the supervisors are (or even their failing to wear an armband on a picket line) can incur a £20k fine.

**Deduction of union subscriptions from pay will stop**

This measure has been dressed up as a cost-saving measure but employees and employers enter into this arrangement voluntarily.

You don’t have to be cynical to realise that this is an attempt to weaken the unions’ strength in terms of numbers and finances.

**“Facility time” will be cut**

This will radically reduce the amount of time that trade union representatives spend helping members with problems and dealing with workplace issues.

**Employers can bring in agency workers to cover for strikers**

Banned in the UK since 1973, its reintroduction will make it much easier for employers to break strikes.

We need to ensure that we keep up the pressure to end this nasty and unnecessary piece of legislation.

85,000 people descended on the Tory Party Conference to protest against austerity and the Tory Trade Union Bill.

UNISON will be opposing this spiteful Trade Union Bill by every means necessary - legally, industrially and politically.

This is a political attack and we are working with both Houses in Parliament (the Commons and the Lords) to bring political pressure on the Government.

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) has organised a mass lobby of Parliament on the 2nd November and Leeds will be represented at that lobby by your elected UNISON Convenors and Branch Officers.

We will ensure that Leeds MPs understand the strength of feeling about the Bill and explain that the Bill will undermine the right to strike and risk public safety and service delivery.
We Need a Living Wage Mr Osborne
(with no strings attached).

First, this new rate – which Osborne wants us to call the “National Living Wage” – falls well short of the independently assessed Living Wage. Osborne’s “living wage” isn’t a living wage at all.

Second, the “Living Wage” only applies to people over the age of 25. If you’re under 25, you still have the same necessities of life – somewhere to live, fuel, food etc. – but it seems you aren’t entitled to a wage that allows you to buy them.

Third, whilst Osborne is promising an increase in the minimum wage, he is slashing working tax credits. The independent Institute for Fiscal Studies estimate that there are 8.4 million working age households eligible for tax credits who might gain £200 a year from the uprated minimum wage. But they will lose £750 a year in benefits and working tax credits. Osborne is giving with one hand... but taking considerably more with the other.

Finally, as we have seen from our leading article, we shouldn’t forget that Osborne is seeking to strip workers of their already limited ability to take industrial action in support of adequate pay. The Tories new trade union bill pretty much makes it impossible to call a legal strike and sets out a raft of ridiculous restrictions. Osborne is therefore engaged in a pretence of offering a living wage - whilst making sure that you can’t fight for one!

In George Osborne’s recent budget, he appeared to pull the rug from under the feet of his Labour critics by announcing an uprated National Minimum Wage (NMW). The NMW rose to £6.70 in October of this year but Osborne has set a new rate of £7.20 to take effect from April 2016.

But is this all that it seems? Has Osborne decided he wants a more equal and just society?

The answer, of course, is “NO!”

And this is why...

---

UNISON General Secretary Election

**Leeds Branch Committee nominates John Burgess**

General Secretaries of trades unions are required by law to be subject to election after no more than 5 years. The process for the General Secretary of UNISON has recently begun.

Leeds UNISON’s Branch Committee have voted overwhelmingly to nominate John Burgess in the upcoming General Secretary election.

As we go to press, it is unclear how many candidates will have received the required number of nominations to be eligible to go forward, but is believed that a number of candidates have. Their names will appear on the ballot papers about to be dispatched.

The General Secretary of UNISON is the principal officer and a key spokesperson of the union. UNISON members are urged to vote in the election.
Why we need...

Workplace Stewards

Stewards are vital to the success of unions. Without them, there is nobody to act as the link between members and the wider union. They represent members in their workplace and put forward their members’ views within the Branch.

Workplaces with stewards are the best informed and best organised and we want to see one in every workplace.

High quality training (on a paid release from work basis) is offered to all who take on this role and we are currently putting the finishing touches to a revamped support and training programme, designed to ensure that all stewards get support tailored to their activity.

Stewards are backed by a fully staffed office and can rely on help and advice from Branch Convenors and Staff.

It is a rewarding role and we would strongly encourage anyone who is interested to give the Branch Office a ring to find out more.

Andy Bailey is a Steward at Foundation – a charity working with socially excluded people operating across the North of England.

Andy and his colleague, Ian Hirst, took on the role of steward in 2013 and carry out the full range of stewards’ duties - representing members at hearings, attending meetings with Managers and putting forward members’ views and keeping members informed.

Andy said “When Ian and I put our names forward, Leeds UNISON immediately arranged for us to go on the 5 day training programme. This training was really useful and gave us a better understanding of the role and a good appreciation of how best to represent our members.

“Confidence and Skills”

“The UNISON Branch also supported us and encouraged us to sit in on disciplinary hearings so we could see how cases were presented. Following this, and the training we received, we had the confidence and skills to represent members ourselves”.

Andy and Ian were accompanied by a UNISON Officer at the first hearings they presented, to ensure advice was on hand. Since then they have represented members at dozens of meetings. Support is available when they feel they need it.

Jane Cusworth has been a UNISON steward at Leeds City Council’s Westgate Contact Centre for two years and Union Learning Rep (ULR) for around 18 months.

Jane said “With the support of my branch, I completed my Stewards training and ULR stage 1 and 2. All the courses were very informative and equipped me with the tools I needed to develop in my new roles.

“With the support of my Senior Steward, Learning Co-ordinators and Branch I began promoting the benefits of UNISON membership and the learning opportunities available to others.

“I also represent members’ views at monthly stewards committees and Branch Committee and feedback to members on the matters discussed”.

If your workplace hasn't got a steward, please get together with your colleagues and elect one.

More information can be obtained by contacting the UNISON Office on (0113) 245 8442 - or email us at branch@leedsunison.org.uk
UNISON Welfare

If you are a member and you are experiencing financial difficulties, whatever the circumstances, “There for You” can offer you support. You may have financial problems for reasons including:

- Relationship breakdown;
- Loss of income;
- Suffering from a long illness;
- Needing to buy equipment because of a disability;
- Caring for someone with special needs or an illness.

There is no guarantee that we can offer you financial help, but thousands of members and their families do benefit from our support every year. For example, in 2012, “There for You” gave more than 4,000 grants to members totalling nearly £750,000.

For more information contact the Leeds UNISON Branch Office on (0113) 245 8442.

UNISON News is printed and published by
Leeds UNISON,
160a Woodhouse Lane,
Leeds LS2 9EN
Tel: (0113) 245 8442
Email: branch@leedsunison.org.uk

Recruit-a-Friend

As a member of UNISON, you already know the value of membership. But our positions are best protected when everybody joins together. That’s why we need all members to recruit any non-member colleagues.

To encourage joining, UNISON has a “Recruit-a-Friend” scheme running until the end of the year. Under the scheme:

- **Existing members earn £10 for each new member recruited**
- **New members recruited receive three months free membership**

PLUS – Any existing UNISON member who recruits 5 or more new members between now and the end of the year will be entered into a prize draw. The winner, drawn at random, will receive an additional £100 on top of the £10 they receive for each new member.

To qualify, all new applications must be made using the special form available from the UNISON Branch Office. Tel: (0113) 245 8442.

**Essential legal cover when you need it most**

Whatever life throws at you, UNISON Legal Services will help to protect you.

As a UNISON member you’re covered for:

**Free legal advice and representation on**

- Personal injury at work (including assaults)
- Personal injury away from work
- Criminal law representation (for work-related matters)
- 30 minutes free telephone advice for any non-work issues
- Employment law accessed through your UNISON Branch
- Free will writing service

Members and their families receive:

- Free legal advice on accidents away from work
- Reduced rate conveyancing and family member wills

For more information, contact the Leeds UNISON Office on (0113) 245 8442.
The Impact of Cuts

Public Sector workers, whether working for a local council, a Community or Voluntary agency, or a F. E. College, will know that over the last four years, their job has got harder.

The services that you provide are over-stretched as the budget provision has decreased year on year.

In brief, there is more work to do, fewer of us to do the work and a deterioration in a quality of the services we provide. This is, of course, demoralising.

After the Election

A Tory majority Government has now been elected in Britain for the first time since 1992 and we face the prospect of 5 more years of them in power.

Just 24.4% of the total electorate voted for them at this election - but this they consider to be a mandate to bring forward further decimating cuts.

With the Tories in, we definitely know what we will be getting; cuts to the public sector, attacks on trade union facility time and legislation to hamper industrial action effectiveness.

What we can do

Where we can, we will work with employers to manage the effects of Government cuts. We have been successful in the past in avoiding compulsory redundancies and we will be working to achieve this wherever we can.

We know however that there are some employers who will use the cuts to their advantage and seek to lessen terms and conditions.

In these cases, we will mobilise support to ensure that such employers don’t get away with their opportunistic manoeuvres. We have been successful in recent years in fighting back and we can be again.

The key to our success however, lies in having a strong union membership and an organised workforce. As always, our message is that we need everyone to belong to UNISON.

Together we are stronger.

The devastating impact of Leeds City Council’s Cuts

Since 2010, Leeds Labour-controlled Council has been subjected to Tory cuts totalling £180m – a 40% cut in funding.

And in that time over 2,500 full-time equivalent jobs have already gone predominantly through the Early Leavers Initiative. For 2016/17, LCC will suffer a further £50m funding gap.

Jobs across the Council are now under threat. The employer is looking at job cuts of up to 500 jobs this year, next year and the year after. It’s quite possible that there may be compulsory redundancies.

These financial pressures have seen an endless amount of restructures and a marked decrease in the size of the Council.

The impact of the cuts will also have a wider impact on the people of Leeds.

As Children’s and Adults Social Care services contract, the most vulnerable will suffer. Rents and the cost of nursery care continue to creep up, and libraries, waste sites and sports centres all face reduced opening hours.
Ethical Care Charter

On the 1st May, Leeds City Council signed up to UNISON’s Ethical Care Charter.

This will allow staff working in Homecare to access training, be paid travel time and expenses and ultimately be paid the Living Wage in line with the Council’s commitment. External providers however, will be given 12 month’s notice to introduce it.

Brian Mulvey, Leeds UNISON Branch Secretary said: “We are obviously very happy that LCC have committed to the charter as it addresses the historical bad practices of some unscrupulous home care providers who didn’t pay travel time and in some cases breached the National Minimum Wage”.

Aspire

Leeds City Council’s Learning Disability Service was transferred from the Council to a Social Enterprise named Aspire on the 1st August 2015.

Members were transferred with their current T&C’s for the life of the contract and full pension rights.

If you wish to discuss anything in regards to your employment with Aspire in the first instance please contact one of your UNISON reps however in the event of there being no one available please contact the Branch Office.

Colleges pay “offer”

UNISON members working in English further education have voted overwhelmingly to reject the pay offer of 0% for 2015-16 from the Association of Colleges (AoC).

The union’s FE committee will now write to the AoC and member colleges, informing them that, unless the offer is improved, UNISON will be in dispute with them.

UNISON is also calling for an urgent meeting of the union side of the joint national forum to discuss next steps with sister unions, including campaigning against the further funding cuts that are expected in Chancellor George Osborne’s autumn statement.

The joint unions submitted a claim in March for a £1 an hour increase and the living wage for the lowest-paid worker.

After negotiations, the AoC offered 0%, with a suggestion that individual colleges could pay more at a local level.

UNISON consulted with members via branches over the summer, and this has now been rejected.

Leeds Citizens and the Living Wage

In July, 650 people attended the launch of a new people’s alliance - The Founding Assembly of Leeds Citizens.

Leeds Citizens are campaigning to tackle a range of social issues - poverty & debt, health & social care and transport – and are committed to improve life in the city.

Amongst those who spoke at the Assembly was Leeds UNISON’s, Glen Pickersgill. Glen was putting the case for why employers should pay “a real living wage”.

Glen argued that the current minimum wage falls well short of what is needed to exist and leaves thousands of people struggling to make ends meet. UNISON has campaigned for a real living wage for years and a number of employers – including some Local Authorities – have already agreed to pay it.

Leeds City Council have now announced that they will pay the “real living wage” that UNISON has called for. The minimum rate of pay they will be offering from April 2016 is £8.01/ hour.

Glen said “We are very pleased with the Council’s announcement but it needs to be seen as a start – not an end point. Full time workers getting the new rate will still only be earning around £15k a year.

“We also know that many Council workers only manage on their pay because of enhancements for things like weekend working. Some employers are claiming to offer enhanced wages - only to snatch it all back by cutting enhancements or jobs. Neither is acceptable”.

UNISON will be seeking to make sure that any employer paying this rate isn’t engaged in a cynical sleight of hand.
The Branch Officer posts to be elected by the AGM are:

- Chairperson
- Vice Chairperson
- Secretary
- Assistant Secretary
- Treasurer
- Assistant Treasurer
- Affiliated Political Fund Officer
- Welfare Secretary
- Education Co-ordinator
- Health & Safety Officer
- Equality Officer
- Publicity Officer
- Membership Services Officer
- Young Members' Officer
- International Officer
- Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator

In addition the AGM will appoint the following having received nominations submitted by the Branch Committee:

- Branch Auditors (2)
- Branch Superannuation Adviser

If you are interested in any of these positions please contact the Branch Office for further information including role descriptions and a nomination form.

---

**AGM 2016**

**Tuesday 8 March at 12.30**
Belle Isle Working Men’s Club, LS10

**Thursday 10 March at 12.30**
Leeds Town Hall, The Headrow, LS1

**Tuesday 15 March at 12.30**
Hough Top Court, LS13

**Thursday 17 March at 5.15pm**
UNISON Branch Office, LS2

---

Government proposals to end six figure redundancy payments could affect YOU.

On 23 May 2015 the Government announced its intention to cap the total cost of exit payments to public sector workers to £95,000. The announcement was generally met with indifference as it was assumed by many that it would only affect the highest earners such as Chief Executives.

However, it is now clear that the proposals could have far-reaching consequences for workers who don’t consider themselves to be high earners.

This is because the proposed cap will cover all payments to those whose jobs are cut, including any early retirement package.

Leeds City Council have done their own modelling and have suggested that those staff graded SO2 and above could be affected.

The Government has just completed a consultation on the proposals and published their response.

They now intend to achieve the stated aim of capping the total value of exit payments and the intention is to introduce clauses to the Enterprise Bill to give effect to the cap.

The effective date of any changes is not yet known but given the relatively short consultation period it is possible that implementation is being considered for April 2016.

UNISON is campaigning against this and is lobbying MPs.