

HANDS OFF OUR PENSIONS!

UNISON is stepping up the campaign to protect public service pensions including the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). This follows new threats from the coalition government's budget cuts. UNISON argues that the money held in our pension scheme is our money not the ConDems rainy day pot! We have paid into it to save for our retirement. It is not there to pay off government debts that were created to save the banks. The government is due to begin consulting with the Trades Unions in June this year.

The four major threats to public service pensions are:

- Changes to how our yearly contributions are calculated
- Increases in the pension contributions that the government wants to take out of our pay to reduce the government's debt – money that will not go into our pensions!
- Recommendations to be made by the Independent Public Pension Scheme Commission on the future structure of our schemes and the benefits they may deliver
- "Fair Deal on Pensions" – what contractors may have to pay if jobs are privatised.

Bernadette Gallagher, Bolton Branch Secretary said *"UNISON nationally has agreed a joint strategy to bring all unions together to fight cuts to our jobs, pensions and services. All unions will be working together to build the campaign.*



Public service pension schemes have around 7.3 million pensioners and 5.4 million active members. Together with their dependants we have around 20 million people to help defend public sector pensions. If it comes to a fight with the government we

clearly have the power to win".

UNISON has produced a special pension campaign leaflet. All UNISON members are asked to help ensure that this pensions leaflet is read and circulated in every workplace.

IT'S ALRIGHT FOR SOME!



LEAFLETING: UNISON activists

While the majority of the British public are suffering in the face of cuts on a record scale, it's alright for some of Britain's top bankers. Bob Diamond, boss of Barclays, is due to collect a bonus of £6.5 million pounds, whilst his bank gets away with paying 1% corporation tax on their vast profits.

Whether this coalition cabinet of millionaires does anything about such tax avoidance and massive bankers' bonuses remains to be seen.

Bolton UNISON activists will be organising more protests over the coming months - feel free to join us!

LONDON HERE WE COME

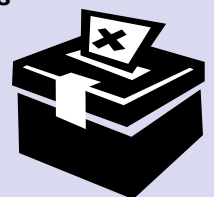
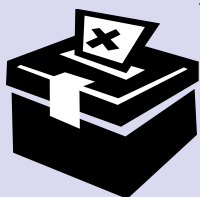


Bolton Branch has been busy organising coaches to London for the anti-cuts demo on 26th March. The TUC is hoping that more than one million people will join the march.

Four coaches have been organised by UNISON and Bolton TUC.

UNISON NATIONAL EXECUTIVE ELECTIONS USE YOUR VOTE!

All UNISON members will soon be able to vote in national UNISON elections
 11 April 2011
 Voting papers are sent to members' home address
 13 May 2011(5pm)
 Voting ends



NON-RECEIPT OF BALLOT PAPERS

Members not receiving ballot papers by 19th April 2011 should contact:
 UNISON direct ballot helpline 0845 355 0845

SEE BACK PAGE FOR BOLTON UNISON'S NOMINATIONS



UNISON LETTERS PAGE

WELFARE RIGHTS UNDER THREAT

Elliot Costello, UNISON Steward

In line with the coalition government's primary focus to reduce the budget deficit by way of draconian cuts to public services, many local authority welfare rights teams up and down the country are currently facing cuts to the services they provide and to the jobs of the staff who provide them.

Yet a period of dramatic financial down turn with increasing unemployment likely is exactly the time when government should be looking to fund those services that provide advice and support to the most vulnerable members of our society, including the sick and disabled and those individuals who find themselves out of work through no fault of their own.

Without proper access to advice about benefits and their qualifying conditions, there is a serious risk that there will be increasing numbers of legitimate claimants that fail to access their correct entitlement to benefits.

The support of the independent advocate is a crucial but often unrecognised role in supporting vulnerable claimants through the intimidating appeals process when the bureaucratic systems of government get it wrong. I have lost count of the times that a client has said that without the specialist advice on benefit case law and representation at appeal tribunals they would never have attempted to challenge a decision to refuse a benefit which they were eventually found to qualify for.

If we are not vigilant in opposing cuts to these services this role could become a thing of the past before we realise it, sacrificed in the name of efficiency.

Without the role of specialist advisers to assist and support people through the process of claims and appeals it is inevitable that many more legitimate claimants will fall through the safety net of the benefit system that was intended to protect them, causing increased poverty and debt and also leading to the wide range of social problems that sprout from these financial roots, including homelessness, crime and the breakdown of family relationships.

The short term savings to public expenditure will not be worth long term suffering to the individual or the cost to our society, both financial and social, if the cuts to the benefits system and the services that advise claimants on that system are accepted without question or challenge.

BERTIE LEWIS PEACE CAMPAIGNER RIP



I want to thank Bolton Unison and Bernie Gallagher (Branch Secretary) on behalf of the family for the kind words at my dad's funeral and also for booking the Derby Ward Labour Club.

The day went well – relatives who came over from New York were astonished at how many people came to pay their respects.

It is a comfort to know that my dad will be remembered for his principles and actions by so many.

*Best wishes,
Roger Lewis
Exeter*

MIXED EMOTIONS ON LEAVING COUNCIL

Sahena Ally (Social Worker, Adult and Community Services)

I started work with Bolton Council in 1980. At that time I didn't know any other Asian women workers anywhere within the authority. In many ways I feel like I was a pioneer. There have been lots of challenges and hurdles to overcome. Despite this I feel proud of the contribution that I have made to the council and our town. I have really enjoyed the work that I have done and feel privileged to have worked alongside some excellent people. Along the way I have had some really good support both from colleagues and the union at times when I have really needed it. I would always advise anyone to make sure that they are a union member. After a great deal of soul searching I recently made the difficult decision to leave my job with the council. I am leaving with a great deal of regret; I will miss the colleagues and friends that I have made. There are certainly difficult times ahead for everyone, especially given the scale of the cuts. I wish everyone well for the future.



HOUSING SCHEMES FACE THE AXE

Bolton At Home Stewards

Several Bolton housing schemes which are operated through Bolton At Home in partnership with Bolton Council face the axe as a result of government cuts.

- Private Sector Renewal works on private terraced housing (pre 1919). The section completes structural repairs, rebuilds walls, and makes improvements to security and also improves the environment. To qualify for grants, landlords must join an accreditation scheme which enforces Gas and Electrical safety measures and helps protect tenants' rights.

- Home Repairs Assistance helps to maintain independence for elderly and vulnerable home owners through essential repairs to keep them warm, safe and dry.

- Private Sector Regeneration operates across 3 areas of significant deprivation within Tonge, Great Lever and Queens Park. This work helps maintain property values, creates employment, reduces crime, reduces deprivation and improves the environment within local communities.

- Disabled Facilities Grants of £400K (2010/2011) help to support disabled residents to access life changing aids and adaptations.

- The Care & Repair Service provides a Handyperson service to the over 60's, carrying out small jobs around the home either free of charge or at a subsidised rate has been a successful addition, providing something not available before.

Communities will suffer without the support needed to improve run down terraced properties across the town. The cost of schemes to support disabled or elderly people is minimal yet they are a lifeline to independence and dignity in the community for those who in many cases would otherwise face institutional care, potentially costing local Council and the NHS budgets a great deal more.

REASONS TO MARCH IN MARCH



Bolton's Children's Services need to find £10million saving, which will lead to 200 job losses

Half of Bolton's Libraries face closure



Inflation is running at 5.1% whilst Public Sector pay is frozen for two years

£600,000 cut in Neighbourhood Services will affect street cleansing, grass cutting, pest control, parks and open spaces with 80 job losses



Independent advice for young people in schools to go with the loss of 28 posts in Bolton Connexions Service

JOBS • GROWTH • JUSTICE

SATURDAY 26 MARCH 2011

BOLTON LIBRARY SERVICES Have Your Say

Bolton Council's public consultation on the future of library services will run from the 1st March and be available on the Council's website (www.bolton.gov.uk/libraries) until midnight on Friday, May 20th.

A consultation pack will be available with a letter from Exec. Member Cllr Sherrington, a questionnaire and a series of data sheets relating to each library. Members of the public can complete the questionnaire on line.

However, hard copies are available on request via the Adult and Community Services Customer Relations telephone number 01204 337288.



TRADE UNION NEWS

UNION WINS HISTORIC COURT RULING

Trade unionists won an historic victory earlier this month when High Court judges ruled that previous injunctions against strike action had been based on "traps and hurdles" for unions. The RMT union won their appeal against an injunction that barred their members on the Docklands Light Railway going on strike. The ballot had won overwhelming support for strike action but the employer had won their case against the unions on the grounds of inaccuracies in the unions' ballot notices. However, Lord Justice Sir Patrick Elias upheld the unions' right to strike and said that the inaccuracies were a matter of human error. The legal test for ballot notices was "as accurate as reasonably practicable in the light of the information in possession of the union", he added.



OVER THE MOON: Bob Crow

There has been a series of cases over the last few years where the Courts have interpreted the industrial action legislation in ever more restrictive ways against trade unions. This judgment should put a halt to that trend. The union must pass on the information that it has about members in its notices, but that is all. It shouldn't be tripped up by inadvertent errors in complying with the extremely complex balloting requirements.

Ruling Recognises Right to Strike

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said that his members were "absolutely over the moon. There is now a precedent in UK law that workers are entitled to strike". There is no right to strike action in British common law but it is a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights, which protects industrial action as an extension of freedom of association. The ruling's recognition of the right is a first in legal history.

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BOLTON UNISON HAS NOMINATED THE FOLLOWING CANDIDATES FOR THE FORTHCOMING NEC ELECTIONS

North West Region

Roger Bannister
Bernadette Gallagher
Karen Reissmann
Tony Wilson
Sophie Smith-Rudge

Local Government Seat

Kathy Smith
Phoebe Watkins
Paul Holmes
Paul Couchman

National Black Members

April Ashley
Bola George
Hugo Pierre

National young members

(only those under 26 yrs can vote for this seat)

Kieran Grogan

Community and Voluntary Seat

(only Community sector members vote for this seat)

Alec McFadden

STANDING WITH WISCONSIN



Public Service workers have held mass demonstrations in Wisconsin USA in response to the threat of huge cuts to jobs, pay and pensions. Huge rallies involving hundreds of thousands of people

have been held across the state. Protesters have occupied the state building in Madison. Trade Unionists have carried placards quoting inspiration from workers in Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East. One of the main issues has been the threat by the state's Republican Party leaders to attack collective bargaining, union organisation and workers rights. Thanking UNISON General Secretary Dave Prentis for his letter to Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, the State's section of the AFL-CIO wrote: "That is why the support you have shown us provides us with such hope and inspiration. We know that together with our union brothers and sisters across the globe, we shall prevail."

Saturday 26 March 2011



MARCH FOR THE ALTERNATIVE

Assemble at 11am at Victoria Embankment, between Temple Place and Blackfriars, to march to a rally in Hyde Park

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