



UNISON

'SPOTLIGHT'

on
Revenues and Benefits



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www.unison.org.uk



THE UNION TEAM

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Jacqui Connelly:	Contact rep in bens
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Jaz Kelsey	Contact rep in bens
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Check out Coventry unison on **Facebook!**

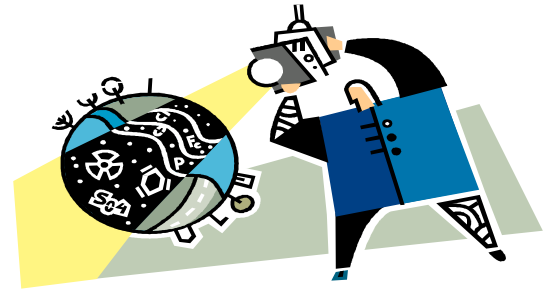


Pakistan flood appeal for trade unionists!

Thanks to your generosity we have raised £100 for the Pakistan solidarity appeal from members in Revenues and Benefits. This money has now been sent to the Trade Union Rights Campaign in Pakistan. As soon as we receive a response to our donation we will let you know.

Thank you once again for your support!!

SPOTLIGHT COMMENT



The coalition Government has been clear in its belief that reducing the huge deficit can **only** be achieved through massive cuts to public services. Unfortunately, they are being economical with the truth. As confirmed by the Governor of the bank of England, Mervyn King, this financial crisis was created in the private banking sector, and so far, they have not been asked to pay any of the money back.

This Government steadfastly refuses to make the bankers culpable for its misdemeanors. Unison rejects this and has put together an alternative (and fully costed) way of reducing the deficit.

REDUCING THE DEFICIT: UNISON'S ALTERNATIVE BUDGET

- **£4.7bn** could be raised every year by introducing a 50% tax rate on incomes over £100,000.
- **£10bn** could be raised every year by reforming tax havens and residence rules to reduce tax avoidance by corporations and 'non-domiciled' residents.
- **£14.9bn** could be raised every year by using minimum tax rates to stop reliefs being used to disproportionately subsidise incomes over £100,000.
- **£30bn** could be raised every year by introducing a Major Financial Transactions Tax on UK financial institutions.
- **£1.8bn** could be saved next year by cancelling Trident, the project is set to cost £76bn. Which could be saved over the next 40 years.
- **£500m** could be saved every year by eradicating healthcare acquired infections from the NHS -the extra cleaners would cost half this.
- **£495m** could be saved every year by adopting measures to improve the health and well-being of NHS staff, thereby reducing sickness absence.
- **£1bn** could be saved every year by halving the local government agency bill, as has been achieved by high performing councils.
- **£5bn** could be raised every year with an Empty Property Tax on vacant dwellings. This only exaggerates housing shortages and harms neighbourhoods.
- **£2.8bn** could be saved every year by ending the central government use of private consultants who bring little discernable benefit.
- **£3bn** could be saved in user fees and interest charges every year if PFI schemes were replaced with conventional public procurement.

Total: £74.195 billion

If you have any thoughts on this, please do get in touch.

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Free legal advice for:

Any non-work issues such as landlord disputes, neighbourhood disputes, matrimonial and consumer issues, free wills
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EXPOSING THE MYTHS

Question:

Are average earnings in the public sector even higher when you compare similar roles, and is it really fair to compare jobs across the public and private sectors?

UNISON response:

It is extremely difficult to compare jobs across the public / private sector divide, not least because so many jobs exist only in one or the other sector. However, one way of comparing pay and roles is by looking at the formal qualifications of employees. Nigel Stanley from the TUC has researched this issue and found the following:-

- Public sector graduates are paid 3.4 per cent less than in the private sector.
- Public sector workers with higher education qualifications short of a degree are paid 6.2 per cent less than in the private sector.
- Public sector workers with A-levels are paid the same as in the private sector.
- Public sector workers with lower skills get paid more than in the private sector.



Question:

Private sector workers put in more hours, and so deserve greater rewards than the public sector. Does this statement really reflect the real situation across the public and private sectors?

“Last year the average public sector worker laboured for 35 hours a week...2 hours less than the typical private sector worker.” **The Times, 3rd Jan 2010.**

UNISON response:

One trick to look out for is anti-public sector journalists/commentators lumping together full-time and part time jobs and claiming that the private sector works longer hours (as in the quote from the Times above). As Ben Goldacre explains in his analysis “this is simply due to the greater number of part time jobs in the public sector – 31% vs 23% – which is a longstanding phenomenon.”

It's also significant that, while contracted hours are often lower in the public sector, large amounts of unpaid overtime is routinely performed by public sector workers.

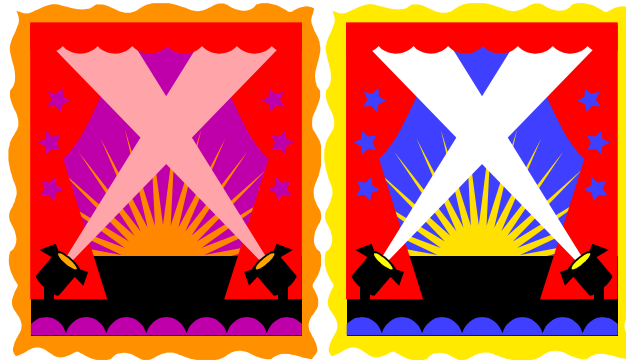
In 2008 researchers from Bristol University found that public sector workers do more unpaid overtime than those working for private companies, The study found that public sector workers do an estimated:

120 million hours of unpaid overtime a year - the equivalent of employing an extra 60,000 people!

They went on to claim that 46 per cent of employees in education, health and social care in the “non-profit sector” work unpaid overtime, compared with 29 per cent of their counterparts in the private sector.

MEMBERS

FORUM



What have the Union ever done for me?

More often than not we are asked questions by members (and non-members!) that continue to come up again and again. For this reason we have decided to put together a short 'question and answer' feature which answers some of those questions, and highlights the reasons why being in a trade union remains so vital in today's Britain.

Q) What have the Union ever done for me?

A) Trade unions provide a variety of services and support to all who choose to become a member. Here are just a few examples:

- Representation in meetings, health reviews and disciplinarys.
- National pay bargaining, including arguing the case for equal pay for men and women.
- Leading the fight to protect and enhance the Local Government pension scheme.
- Benefits and services such as free legal advice both at work and at home.
- Standing up for fairness and equality across Coventry City Council.

Q) What have the Unions really achieved and why are they necessary now?

A) To understand what trade unions have achieved you need to understand what life was like for workers before they existed. Long hours, poor working conditions, inequality and poverty pay. The creation of trade unions allowed an organised movement to challenge these awful workplaces. Conditions were particularly bad in many industrial regions, and for those toiling in the Coal and Cotton industries, health and safety legislation was only an aspiration not a right.

Nowadays, workplace conditions are guided by laws fought for by trade unions across the Country which protect workplace conditions and the treatment of workers. These laws prior to trade unions did not exist.

This work however is still ongoing and new laws will be required as the workplace inevitably changes. This is the principal reason why trade unions remain as necessary and relevant today.

Q) I have never had to use the Union before. What do I get for my monthly subs?

A) Unison offers many services and benefits, many of which have already been mentioned above. The fact remains that you can never be sure when or why you will need to be supported by your union if a workplace issue arises. Not being a member could cost you your job.

Q) The Unions don't have any power anymore, what's the point in joining?

A) It is true that unions are bound by the legislative changes introduced by the Conservatives in the 1980's and continued by the new Labour Government of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. However, unions in some recent disputes have shown what can be done when the union membership stands together in solidarity.

You may remember the appalling treatment of the workforce by the employers at the Ford/Visteon plants in Enfield, Basildon and Belfast in 2009, attempting to sack employees with only minutes to leave the premises. After occupations of these plants lasting weeks, the workforce eventually walked away with a package some 10 times greater than they were originally offered after a humiliating Management climb down. The UNITE union were at the forefront of these negotiations, and the employers were forced to come to a fair and just settlement. Without Unions, this u-turn by the employer would have been unthinkable.

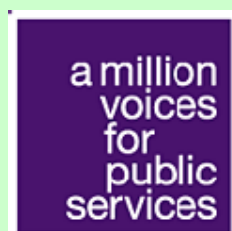
Real power comes through solidarity in the membership when action is required on issues such as jobs, pay and pensions. If the membership fails to support a union directive in large numbers, it significantly weakens the union case and could have an adverse affect on the workforce and its terms and conditions.

Q) Do I have to abide by a Union decision to take industrial action even if I disagree with the reasons?

A) When a ballot votes in favour of industrial action, Unison would expect that all members abide by this decision. Nobody takes industrial action lightly and it's important to remember that this is a last resort. If members choose to continue to work through disputes it not only undermines the work of the union, but creates bad feeling among members who have supported the action (and in the case of strike action lost pay). A united union is a strong union. By working together and showing real solidarity with colleagues, the union is more able to achieve the fair and just workplace we all strive for.

Q) Union's talk a lot about solidarity, but what does this really mean?

A) Solidarity is one of the most vital components in a trade unions armoury. It's a common misconception that those reps who attend branch meetings wield all of the power and are able to solve all of the problems that arise - If only this were true! - Decisions made at the branch have to have the support of the membership to succeed. The union's strength and its ability to fight for change have to be supported by ordinary union members, not just the representatives.



Spotlight recipe



Vegetable Bhajis (Oven baked healthy option) – Makes approx 15

Ingredients: (Total weight of the mix should be approx 1lb)

2 Onions + Vegetables of your choice, chopped finely
4 tbspoon of Plain/Gram Flour
1 teaspoon of Cumin
1 spoon of Ground Coriander
1 spoon of Turmeric
1 spoon of Chilli powder
2 fresh chilli's chopped (optional)
2 Cloves of Garlic
1 spoon of Salt
A few twists of pepper
8 tbspoon Water

Method

Preheat the oven to 200/210c.

Gently fry the onions in a teaspoon of oil until soft and starting to brown. Then, place all the ingredients in a bowl and mix together well with the water. Once the mix has begun to bind, to make the bhaji you can either press the mixture together between two tablespoons and place on a non stick surface, or if you prefer, place a small metal pastry ring on your tray and fill with the mixture. The bhaji should only be about 1cm thick to get the best results.

Place in the oven for approx 10 mins before turning them over. Turn them every 5 minutes. This regular turning helps to crisp up the exterior better, but serve as you prefer! – Total cooking time 20 -25 mins.

Add more/less spice to suit your own taste. These are only guidelines. Good luck!