

OCTOBER 2009

Public services mustn't be sacrificed for bankers' mistakes



UNISON Labour Link will pick up the baton from UNISON at the TUC and make a powerful case for public services at the Labour Conference in Brighton says chair of UNISON Labour Link, Steve Warwick. He believes that the union is in tune with the public mood and that people do not want to see public services cut to pay for mistakes made in the financial sector.

At the TUC Conference, UNISON pointed out that the 2009 Budget increases government debt every year up to 2016 to tackle the recession and bail out the financial sector. While agreeing that the stimulus was the right response to ensure stability and restore growth quickly, the union attacked the level of cuts being planned between 2011 and 2018. UNISON believes they will damage both vitally needed services and local economies whilst ultimately impairing the economic recovery.

UNISON also pointed out that aggressive efficiency targets are already damaging

public services and promoting privatisation. The Operational Efficiency Programme is compelling all public bodies to outsource services. Such measures end up being more expensive, fragment and weaken public service flexibility and capability and staff experience worsening pay, conditions and pensions.

Steve Warwick says that UNISON's positive Million Voices message presents a powerful alternative: "We understand the need to improve efficiency in services, but we want to be part of that process, to show that in-house teams can be the solution, not the problem. We believe that there is an alternative that involves fair and increased taxation, that recognises the wider benefits of public services to the economy and society and understands that current provision is affordable and the best route out of recession. Labour needs to be clear that a crisis made in the financial sector isn't going to be solved by cutting public services."



to add your voice go to www.unison.org.uk/million

UNISON rebuts ranting Tory NHS-hater

UNISON has moved swiftly to counter the anti-NHS rant from Tory MEP Daniel Hannan. Hannan's extreme views were reported in UNISON Labour Link News earlier this year, but shot to national attention when his views were used recently by right-wing American commentators to try and trash Barack Obama's health reforms.

UNISON immediately sent an NHS fact file to its sister unions in the States to counter the lies being peddled by right-wing groups about the NHS.

Dave Prentis, General Secretary of UNISON, said:

"I, like so many other people in the UK, owe my life to the NHS. We are outraged by the

gross lies and distortions, being spread in the US about our NHS. A universal health system that is free at the point of need is something that we can all be proud of - it is a mark of a civilised, caring society.

"People love the NHS in this country because it is always there for them when they need it. Regardless of your income, the NHS provides peace of mind even at the most uncertain economic times, like those we're experiencing now. In the US losing your job, means losing your health insurance.

"America may be the world's richest nation, but almost 50m people there are not covered by health insurance, so President Obama is to be congratulated for trying to bring in health reform.

"UNISON is sending its fact file to our sister union's in the States, to give them the ammunition to fire at the NHS detractors. They will see for themselves the truth about how our NHS operates and how patients are treated."



BAME Labour urges BAME workers to join the Society.

The Chair of BAME Labour Ahmad Shahzad tells UNISON Labour Link News that black workers in UNISON and other trade unions should join BAME Labour in order to strengthen the society and the links between UNISON, and other trade unions, and BAME Labour.

It was with the trade unions' positive support and help that, in 1990, the Black and Asian Socialist Society was formed with the blessing of the Labour Party NEC. However, the Society went through a rocky period and was not able to properly pursue its agenda of fighting racism, seeking better and equal representation in public life or in the political arena for BAME communities, and galvanising maximum support for Labour.

Since the society was relaunched in June 2006, Chair Ahmad Shahzad argues that BAME Labour has made significant advances: successfully recruiting thousands of new members; winning the case for a seat on Labour's NEC and two seats on the Scottish and Welsh Labour NECs and reclaiming its four seats at Labour's National Policy Forum. BAME Labour organised popular Leadership and Deputy Leadership Hustings in 2007; three successful training events for members, the most recent being held under the OBAMA Scholarship initiative in April 2009 and four successful fringe meetings at the Labour Party's Annual Conference since 2006. At the Labour Party's Conference 2007, the Chair of BSS successfully introduced a contemporary resolution on the single equality act, which also deals with questions of BAME and Women's Representation. BAME Labour also successfully negotiated a Rule change at the 2007 Labour Conference to allow BSS Executive members to be Party Ex Officio delegates from the next year's Conference and to accept all ethnic minority officers as full CLP Officers. A 54 Group has been established with BAME MPs to campaign to increase the numbers of BAME MPs to 54 and an amendment to the Equality Bill has been secured to increase BAME representation in all areas of politics and public bodies, especially in the Westminster and European Parliaments by introducing positive action measures. Ahmad Shahzad credits 2007 President of UNISON, Norma Stephenson for help in strengthening the link between BAME Labour and UNISON.

London UNISON Labour Link activist June Nelson is a BAME Labour National Committee member. She says that the big task facing BAME Labour is to ensure that more BAME candidates are selected: "There is concern among the communities that Labour is not doing enough to address these issues. It is imperative that Labour takes a far more strategic approach. BAME Labour is the largest elected representative body for the ethnic minorities in politics and the membership has high hopes. Improving BAME representation in Parliament will be a key test of Labour's commitment to a fairer, more diverse and representative Britain."

BAME workers can join BAME Labour by visiting the BAME Labour website: www.bamelabour.org.uk or email: bamelabour@new.labour.org.uk

A day in the life of Jud

Earlier this year the MPs expenses scandal rocked Westminster. As it was easy to think that the system is rotten from top to bottom. But relationships with trade unions. Before the summer recess, UNISON give us an account of what life is really like for a backbench MP at W



The task we were given for Labour Link – write about a day in your life as an MP. Impossible to do – every day is different!

Also what you plan to do at the start of the day often falls by the wayside as some crisis or pressing concern from a constituent comes up. My last two days have been taken over by lobbying Ministers to get a regulation to help collection of plastics used on farms to wrap silage etc – good for the environment and providing jobs in Amber Valley recycling plastic at a local factory and in two constituencies in Wales and Scotland.

My week started at 7am in the Radio Derby studio explaining how the Parliamentary recess does not mean MPs are going off on 12

weeks holiday. 12 weeks – wouldn't that be wonderful! Most people don't realise that MPs have two jobs and two workplaces – one in Parliament and one in the constituency. If all our time is spent in Westminster we can become remote from our constituents. When Parliament isn't sitting we have a chance to catch up – on paperwork and reading, constituency cases, coffee mornings and doorknocking, visiting organisations and this year a council by-election.

So here's just a few examples of what I've been doing recently at home and in London. The best event – our third Veterans Day tea party for nearly a hundred veterans, Land Army Women

Judy Mallaber MP

The nation scoured the daily spending habits of our elected representatives and looked aghast at moats and duck-houses, we also know that many MPs work long hours away from home to represent their constituents effectively and have close Labour Link News asked Judy Mallaber MP for Amber Valley, co-convenor of the UNISON group of MPs at Westminster, to Westminster:



and Bevin Boys at a local secondary school. Pupils and teachers showed off their musical skills to entertain the audience with young army and air cadets joining in. I welcomed fifty more constituents who travelled to Westminster for a guided tour of Parliament organised by my office.

The worst event – having to speak at the funeral of our wonderful local councillor Geoff Carlile, a great character who has contributed so much to our area. I just got through without choking up.



Most memorable parliamentary moment – getting in at Prime Minister's Questions on the delivery that day of a Perfect Pots hanging basket to Downing Street by pupils from the Holbrook Autism Centre. People with autism need care but with help can also contribute to the workforce and community.

Cases at my last advice surgery included a delightful pensioner couple being ripped off with the wrong coke provided for their boiler; local welfare rights worker about a case (now resolved) with ridiculous questions asked of a

non-cohabiting couple; parents about their daughter's difficulty with an adoption; two sisters frustrated at a relative not being chased for benefit fraud; and issues with the police and local jobcentre.

Other great events – the e-merge festival organised by Derbyshire youth service where I'm quizzed by youngsters wearing 'racism is pants' t-shirts; the Ripley Hospital Fayre (another letter to do when I discover planners have put a stop on the building of new wards); the

Horsley Woodhouse carnival with its marching band competition, floats, vintage cars and tractors and much more.

And all the time there is the relentless stream of letters and emails to deal with – a thousand a week at the last count. And will I manage to sort out a date for that meeting with the health secretary after the last UNISON group meeting? Being an MP is a fantastic job – but it's never done....

Don't let Tories wreck Sure Start!

Earlier this month I went to the brilliant Morningside Children's Centre in Hackney to launch National Sure Start Week and help promote the universal services on offer for parents and children.

Ten years ago there were no Sure Start Children's Centres - now there are over 3,000 and our Labour government is on track to fulfil its manifesto pledge of 3,500 centres open by next year.

I know lots of UNISON members use children's centres and thousands of you work in them too. I want to thank all those UNISON members who campaigned long and hard before 1997 for better childcare and support for young children and have helped make Sure Start such a success.

Parents regularly tell me how much they value their local Sure Start centre and the real help they offer with childcare, healthcare and other universal services for their children. All parents can now get free childcare for three and four year olds and from this month we're rolling it out to two year olds too. And I've talked to many Sure Start workers who tell me they love going into work every day, watching children play and develop.

But the Tories want to cut the Sure Start budget by £200 million per year - that's 20 per cent of the £1 billion we now invest each year. This is the equivalent of one in five children's centres having to close their doors, just at the time when families need them most. And this

summer George Osborne made clear that - just like schools - Sure Start will not be spared from the deep and immediate cuts to frontline public services the Tories are determined to make if they get back into office.

This Labour Government will keep investing in Sure Start because we know the early years of a child's life are so important. But I don't want to put that at risk by letting the Conservatives cut Sure Start.

So I urge you to join me in the next few months as we defend our record on Sure Start against Tory attack. Remind your friends and family that children's centres are one of Labour's greatest achievements. Support your local Sure Start by spreading the word, letting parents know about the services on offer and highlighting the fantastic work that children's centres are doing day in day out.

We are collecting real stories of people's experiences of Sure Start Children's Centres to demonstrate what a difference they have made. Get involved in our campaign to promote children's centres and preserve them for future generations. And in the run up to the general election help us expose the Tory threat as we campaign for Sure Start and campaign for Labour.

Ed Balls is Labour's Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families



Send your stories to labourlink@unison.co.uk

For more information about the UNISON Labour Link contact **0845 355 0845**
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